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WHIRLPOOLS

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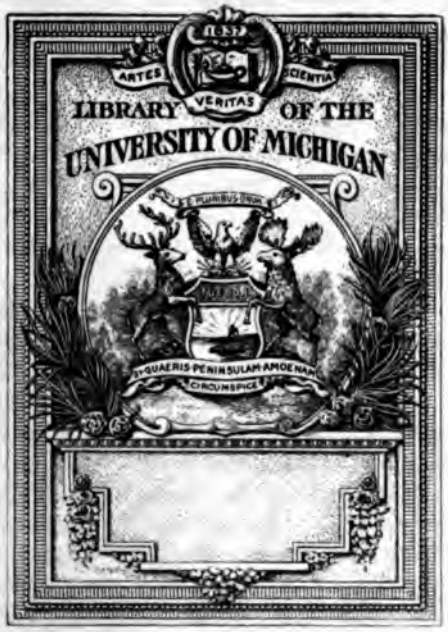
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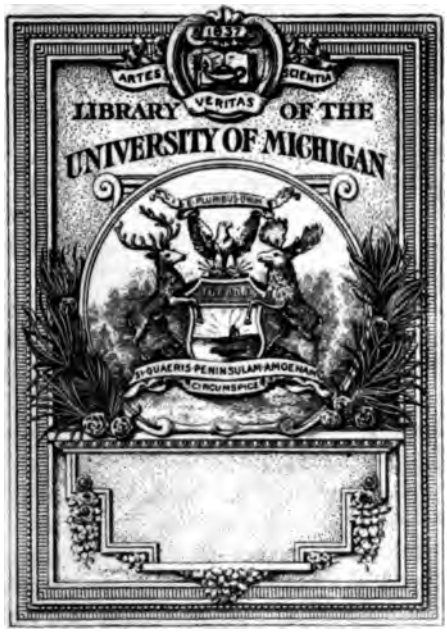
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WHIRLPOOLS

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THE WORKS OF

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

WHIRLPOOLS
"QUO VADIS"
WITH FIRE AND SWORD
THE DELUGE
PAN MICHAEL
CHILDREN OF THE SOIL
HANIA, AND OTHER STORIES
SIELANKA, A FOREST PICTURE AND OTHER STORIES
THE KNIGHTS OF THE CROSS
WITHOUT DOGMA
ON THE FIELD OF GLORY

WHIRLPOOLS

A Novel of Modern Poland

BY

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

AUTHOR OF "WITH FIRE AND SWORD," "THE DELUGE,"
"QUO VADIS," "CHILDREN OF THE SOIL,"
"WITHOUT DOGMA," ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE POLISH BY

MAX A. DREZMAL

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WHIRLPOOLS.

PART FIRST.

I

GRONSKI arrived at the Jastrzeb manor-house about midnight. In the house all were asleep excepting an old servant and the young heir, Ladislaus Krzycki, who awaited his guest with supper and greeted him with great cordiality, for notwithstanding the disparity in their ages they were bound by ties of an old intimacy. It continued from those days when Gronski, as a university student, surrounded with a tutelary friendship the youthful Krzycki, who was attending the gymnasium. Later they met frequently and the closer friendly relations between Gronski and the Krzycki family did not undergo any interruption.

Therefore when, after the first greetings, they repaired to the dining-room the young heir of Jastrzeb again began to embrace Gronski. After a while, having seated him at the table, he shook from his eyes the remnants of drowsiness which had oppressed him, became thoroughly animated, and said with sincere happiness:

"How immensely fortunate I am that at last we have you at Jastrzeb; and Mother, how she has been expecting you! I, whenever I am in Warsaw, always begin with you, but a year has passed since your last visit here."

Gronski inquired about Pani Krzycki's health and that of the younger members of the household, after which he said:

"It is, indeed, strange that I have not been out in the

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country, not only with you but elsewhere. In summer time they dispatch me every year to Carlsbad, and after Carlsbad one strays somewhere in the west. Besides, in Warsaw matters are now seething as in a caldron, and it is difficult to tear one's self from all this."

The conversation, which started with a lengthy discussion of public affairs, was afterwards turned by Ladislaus towards private matters:

"Did you," he said, "besides the notification of the death of Uncle Zarnowski, receive a letter from Mother? I ask for this reason: I mailed first the notification, and later in the day Mother decided to write the letter."

"I received both and for that reason I am here. I tell you candidly I would not come merely to attend your uncle's funeral. It is true that a year ago, when he was in Warsaw for medical treatment, we dined together for several months at the same club, but that was all; though people were astonished that such a misanthrope, who avoided everybody, did not somehow run away from me. How were your relations? Were they cool to the end?"

"Rather, there were none. He would not receive anybody and did not wish to see any one, not even his parish-priest. Extreme unction was administered by the Canon of Olchowa. When he became seriously ill, we visited him in Rzeslewo, but he received us with blunt discourtesy. Mother did not mind it and repeated her visits, though at times he was disagreeable towards her. As for myself, I confess that I did not call there again until he was in a very critical state."

"Did he leave a large estate?"

"Rzeslewo is a huge patch of that kind of soil in which you can anywhere plant at least onions. There is not one copper coin of indebtedness. At one time Uncle had a house in Warsaw, to which he removed the entire equipment from Rzeslewo, which was not, by any means,

despicable. We thought that he would reside permanently in the city, but he later sold everything; from which I infer he must have left funds. Some, as is customary with people who are fond of exaggeration, say hundreds of thousands. The Lord only knows. But this much is certain: he inherited a great deal from his brothers. I do not know whether you have ever heard that there were three of them. One perished, while yet a student, in a duel at Dorpat; the other died, also young, from typhoid fever, and Uncle Adam got everything they left."

"It is said that he lived very poorly."

"He stayed a great deal in Warsaw and abroad for his health. How he lived there I do not know, but, after his return to Rzeslewo, very wretchedly. I think, however, that this was more due to whimsicality than to greed, for he was not greedy. You would not believe how that manor appeared; how everything was denuded and abandoned. In every room the roof was leaky, and if some unexpected guests or unknown relatives arrive for the funeral, I will have to invite them to Jastrzeb, for there I would not know where to house them."

"Do you know of any other relatives?"

"Yes, there are Pani Otocka and her sister; also Dolhanski, who undoubtedly will come, and ourselves. I have not heard of others, though in all probability they will be found, as in Poland everybody is related. Mother insists that we are the nearest, but, to tell the truth, we are not very close; as the deceased was a distant cousin of Mother's."

"And Pani Otocka and Panna Marynia?"

"Better ask Mother about that; yesterday for an hour she was expounding to me as to who was born to whom; what he was to whom; whom did who's sister marry, and what was who's relation to the deceased. I could not

grasp it all. Those ladies will be here to-morrow at one o'clock, and with them an English lady, their friend."

"I know; they told me about that in Warsaw, not knowing that they would chance upon the funeral. But that English lady speaks Polish almost as well as we do."

"What? How is that?"

"Her father owned a factory in which he employed many Polish workmen. The young lady, while a child, had a Polish nurse, and later some emigrant taught her Polish."

"And that she should care for it!"

"Among the English people you will find many odd characters, and this Mr. Anney was an odd character in this respect, that he could, like Lord Dudley, select for his heraldic device: '*Causas non fata sequor*,' because, like him, he also loved Poland, Polish history, and the Poles. The workmen were sometimes turbulent and caused him much annoyance, but this did not dishearten him. He established schools for them, procured priests, took charge of the orphans, etc."

"That was a righteous man. But Miss Anney, is she pretty? — young?"

"About Pani Otocka's age — a year younger or older — and they are very fond of each other. How long is it since you have seen Pani Otocka and Marynia?"

"It is six years. Pani Otocka was not yet married and Panna Marynia Zbyltowska was a girl, perhaps ten years old, in short dresses. I well remember her because even then she played the violin and was regarded as a child-wonder. My mother drew nearer to them last summer in Krynica and has become extraordinarily captivated with them. She insisted that this winter I should renew their acquaintance, but they left Warsaw for the winter. Even then she commanded me to invite them in my own name

to Jastrzeb, and a few days before the death of Uncle, she wrote to them to come for a lengthy visit. Day before yesterday we received a dispatch that they will come. You are on intimate terms with them?"

"Yes, on intimate and very sincere terms," answered Gronski.

"Because I wanted to speak with you a little about them, but the hour is late and you are after a journey. Perhaps it would be better to defer it until to-morrow."

"I slept on the train and it is not far from the station to your place. Besides, I have the bad habit of not retiring to sleep before two o'clock."

Ladislaus' countenance bore slight traces of perplexity. He poured out for himself a glass of wine, drank it, and then said:

"The matter is somewhat delicate. I am certain that Mother has concocted some scheme. Perhaps she may have written to you about this and, if not, she will speak about it, because she is much concerned about your opinion, and in a certain contingency will ask your assistance. Several times she incidentally spoke about your influence with Pani Otocka. I believe that you have influence with everybody, not excluding my mother. For that reason I would like to ask a favor of you."

Gronski glanced at the young nobleman and afterwards at the servant, as if he wanted to say: "Why is this witness here?" Ladislaus understood and said:

"He is very deaf, so we can speak quite freely. He wheezes because he has the asthma."

Afterwards he continued:

"Mother for the past two years has been bent upon my getting married, so she bustles about, writes voluminous letters, and sends me every winter to Warsaw, and I am certain that last summer she was in Krynica not so much for her own health, which, God be praised, she preserves

so well, but to look over the young ladies and make a selection. And there these cousins of mine have so bewitched her that she returned, as I surmise, with a prepared project."

"I must give you warning," interrupted Gronski, "that so far as Panna Marynia is concerned you are building an edifice upon ice, as in the first place she is but sixteen; and again she will, at the end of autumn, return to the conservatory in Brussels; and thirdly her whole soul is wrapped up in her violin and in all probability will always remain there."

"May it stay there. You say 'you are building,' but I not only am not building, but would prefer that Mother would not build, as it will be unpleasant for her. After all, my dear mother is the most upright soul in the world, and beyond doubt all she desires is that I should have a good and estimable woman for a wife; but I would prefer that my future spouse should not resemble too much a Grecian statue."

"Well then?"

"Well then, Panna Marynia is not involved but only an ideal and, at the same time, a warm young widow: to which arrangement I cannot by any means assent."

"I will answer with a Lithuanian anecdote, according to which an old woman, to a peasant's assertion that he did not fear the master, replied, 'Because thou hast never seen him.' Likewise, you have never seen Pani Otocka, or have forgotten how she looks."

But Ladislaus repeated:

"Not for the world, even if she looked like a sacred painting."

"Then perhaps you love another?"

"Why, you yourself tormented me last winter about Panna Rose Stabrowska, and I admit that she has made an impression upon my heart. But I did not permit my-

self to fall in love with her, because I know her parents would not give her to me. I am not and will not be rich enough for them. For that reason I escaped from Warsaw before the close of the carnival. I did not wish to envenom with vain feeling my life or hers, if she should love me."

"But in case of a will in your favor? Would you not rush into the smoke like a Uhlan of old? Is it not true?"

"Most assuredly; but as I cannot depend upon that, and as that will not happen, there is no necessity of talking further about it."

"You spoke, however, of asking a favor of me. In what can I serve you?"

"I wanted to beg you not to fortify my mother in her designs as to Pani Otocka."

"How queer you are! Why, when your mother perceives your disinclination towards her, she will banish the thought."

"Yes, but there will remain a little regret for herself and for me. A person is always disappointed when his plans miscarry, and Mother is so eternally worried, though often without reason, because, after all, no ruin is threatening us. But she has so much confidence in your judgment that if you will explain to her that it is better to abandon those thoughts, she will abandon them. However, you will have to contrive it so that it will appear to her that she herself came to that conclusion. I know you can do it, and I rely upon your friendship."

"My dear Laudie," said Gronski, "in these affairs I have less experience, and therefore less judgment, than the first female neighbor on the border of your estate. In your mother's letter there appears, word for word, the same expression: 'I rely upon your friendship.' In view of this, there remains only one thing to do, and that is not to meddle in the affair at all, — especially as I will can-

didly state to you that I entertain for Pani Otocka no less friendship than I do for you. Considering the matter from another light, it is peculiar that we should speak of Pani Otocka without considering her. It is allowable for your mother to believe that every woman, if you would but stretch out your hand towards her, would grab it with alacrity; but not for you. For you renounce things in such a way as if everything depended upon you, and I assure you that it is not so, and that if Pani Otocka should ever decide to marry, she will be exceedingly particular in her choice."

"You are perfectly right," answered Krzycki, "but I am not, of course, so foolish or so vain as to imagine that the whole thing depends upon me. If I have expressed myself in an unsuitable manner, it is because I thought only of Mother and myself and not at all of Pani Otocka. All that I care about is that Mother should not urge me to seek her hand, as I conjecture I might, after all, get the mitten."

Gronski scanned the shapely figure of the youth and answered with a certain benevolent petulance:

"That is well, although I do not know whether you are talking sincerely; for men like you, the deuce knows why, have great luck with women and they know it perfectly well. What have you against Pani Otocka? Why, you hardly know her. Let me tell you that both of those ladies are of such high quality as you rarely find."

"I believe it, I believe it; but, in the first place, Pani Otocka is fully three years younger than myself, which means that she is twenty-four, and yet she is a widow."

"Then you have a prejudice against widows?"

"I confess that I have. Let matrimony give me everything that it can possibly give, but a marriage with a widow will not give me all that. A widow! — To think that every word which the maiden blushingly and with

palpitating heart whispers, the widow has already told to some one else; and that which in a maid is, as it were, a sacrifice to love, in a widow is but a repetition. No, I thank you, for a flower which somebody else has previously plucked. Good fortune is not inherited with a heritage, nor procured at second hand. Let not only matrimony, but also love, give me all they can give, and, if not, then I prefer remaining an old bachelor."

"My dear," answered Gronski, "between the heart and a bag of money there is, however, a vast difference. Money, after you once part with it, you have no more, but the heart is a living organism which regenerates and creates new forces."

"That may be, — in every case, however, the memory of the past remains. Finally, I am not enunciating any general theories, but merely my personal views. Plainly, I could not love a widow and I do want to love my wife, even though slightly. Otherwise what enjoyment would I have in life? A rural estate? Good! I am an agriculturist and I agree to plough and sow until death. But whoever imagines that this will give peace and happiness, simply has no conception of the load of care, bitterness, affliction, deception, self reproach, and strife with the bad will of mankind and nature which one must endure. There are, it is true, brighter moments, but far oftener one must defend himself against downright loathsomeness. Now I want at least this: that I shall return willingly home from the field or barn; that in the home there shall await me fresh, rosy, and tempting cheeks which I crave to kiss, and eyes into which I would long to gaze. I want to have some one on whom I can bestow all that is best in me. I speak of this, not as one who is infatuated with the romantic, but as a sober man who can keep accounts of expenditures and receipts, not only in husbandry but also in life."

Gronski thought that in reality every matured masculine

life should bear two faces; one with wrinkled brow, expressive of intense mental strain, turned towards the problems of humanity, and the other calm and peaceable at the fireside in the home.

"Yes," he said, "I would be delighted with such a home as a refuge from care and in it 'fresh, rosy and tempting cheeks' as an attraction."

Ladislaus, in his laughter, displayed his sound, shining teeth and answered joyously:

"Ah, how it does delight me! the soul almost squeaks."

And they both began to laugh.

"But," said Gronski, "one must be lucky enough to find that and courageous enough to win."

To Krzycki there suddenly came the recollection of a certain ball in Warsaw; of Panna Rose Stabrowska, her pensive eyes, and her white, half-childlike shoulders protruding from the net-lace like watery foam. He therefore sighed quietly.

"Sometimes," he said, "courage also is necessary to bridle one's self."

In the chamber for an interval could be heard only the measured tick-tack of the cumbrous clock and the wheezing of the asthmatic servant, who dozed, leaning against the sideboard.

The hour was late. Gronski rose and, having roused himself from a momentary revery, said, as if speaking to himself:

"And those ladies will be here to-morrow."

Afterwards he added with a touch of sadness:

"Ah, at your age it is not permissible to bridle one's self."

II

THE ladies did actually arrive at Jastrzeb the next day about noon, followed immediately afterwards by Dolhanski, who did not, however, see them on the road, because at the station he became occupied entirely with the receipt of the baggage and therefore arrived in a separate conveyance. The guests did not find Krzycki at home. As the burden of the funeral, and all cares connected with it, fell upon him, he left an hour earlier for Rzeslewo. The obsequies were to take place at three o'clock. Ladislaus' mother arrived at the Rzeslewo church with Pani Otocka, Panna Marynia, and their friend Miss Anney. In the second carriage Gronski and Dolhanski came, while the third and last one brought the younger members of the Krzycki family, — eleven-year-old Anusia and Stas, who was a year younger, together with their French instructress and the tutor, Laskowicz. Pani Krzycki reminded her son of his feminine relatives and introduced him to Miss Anney, but he barely had time to bow and cast a glance at her when he was summoned away on some matter relating to the final funeral arrangements. Alighting from the carriage, the ladies could scarcely press their way into the church, although an effort was made to clear a path for them, for in the church and adjacent enclosure an unusual throng held sway. The greater landed gentry were represented in extremely scant numbers, as the deceased Zarnowski did not associate with any one, and besides Jastrzeb, Gorek, and Wiatrak, did not visit any of the manors in the neighborhood. In their place, the Rzeslewo peasantry appeared as one man, with

their wives and children. The reason for this was that from some unknown source and for some inexplicable reason, a rumor circulated among them that the deceased had bequeathed to them his entire fortune. Quite a number stood outside the church fence, and their loud voices and anxious faces indicated the impression which the rumor of the bequest had made upon them.

After chanted vigils and a sufficiently long mass, white surpliced priests, preceded by a cross, appeared at the church doorway. After them the coffin was borne. The hearse stood ready to receive the remains, but peasants, in implicit faith of the bequest, lifted it upon their shoulders to carry to the cemetery, which was a verst distant and in which was located the tomb of the Zarnowskis. Gronski gave his arm to Pani Krzycki, Dolhanski to Pani Otocka, while the duty of escorting the light-haired Miss Anney fell to Krzycki. After an interval, the funeral cortege slowly proceeded in the direction of the cemetery.

From under the shade of church lindens it soon advanced upon the field-road, flooded with sunshine, and extended itself in a long line. At the head went the priests; after them the coffin, swung high up on the shoulders of the peasants; the relatives and guests followed, and after them came swarms of gay peasant national dresses and feminine handkerchiefs gaudily spotted with yellow and red colors, which glaringly contrasted with the green, sprouting spring corn. Church flags, with skulls and pictures of saints, floated heavily in the golden air and at times heaved with a flap when assailed by the wind. In this manner, glistening in the sun, the crowd approached the poplars which shaded the cemetery. From time to time the chant of priests resounded, breaking out suddenly and with great sadness. Nearer the cemetery the peasants commenced the litany and gusts of wind seized these Polish and Latin songs and carried them with the odor of

candles, which were continually blown out, and the scent of the drippings of the torches to the forests.

Krzycki, who escorted Miss Anney, observed that her hand, which rested upon his arm, trembled considerably. It occurred to him that she probably had tired it, holding her parasol on the road from Jastrzeb to Rzeslewo, and he paid no more attention to it. In the conviction that such a solemnity as a funeral exempted him from starting the usual social conversation, he walked in silence. He was fatigued and hungry. Disordered thoughts rushed into his head. He thought of his uncle, Zarnowski, of his inability to mourn for him, of the funeral, of his newly-arrived cousins, and of yesterday's conversation with Gronski. At times he would gaze, abstractedly, at the near by fields and half-consciously would note that the winter-corn on the fertile Rzeslewo soil, as well as the spring grain, gave promise of a bountiful harvest. After a certain time he recollected that it would be proper for him to devote a little more attention to his companion.

Somehow, after a few stealthy glances, his curiosity, which thus far had been deadened by fatigue, hunger, and ill-humor, was awakened. The proximity of a woman, young and, as he observed, stately, began to affect him. It seemed strange to him in the first place that he was conducting over the Rzeslewo highway an Englishwoman, who came, the Lord knew from where; that a short while before he was unacquainted with her and at present felt the warmth of her arm and hand. He observed also that her hand, tightly incased in a glove, though shapely, was not at all small; and he thought that the reasons for this were the English sports — tennis, rowing, archery, and the like. "Our Polish women," he thought, "look differently." Under the influence of these reflections upon English sports, it seemed to him that

from this quaintly attired form some peculiar power, healthiness, and energy emanated. His companion began to interest him more and more. Leading her on his arm, he could see only her profile, upon which he bestowed increased attention. As a consequence of more exact observation, his curiosity intensified. In the first moments he conceded only that she was a comely and buxom person, but later he soliloquized in this fashion: "How vastly more stately and, sincerely speaking, more beautiful she is than Pani Otocka or that child, whose dresses reach to her ankles and whose soul, as Gronski says, is in the violin!" But this, however, was not the strict truth, for Pani Otocka, a slender brunette with the expression of a blonde, was of a type more exquisite and racial, and the "child" had a countenance simply angelic. But at that particular moment, if a secret ballot had been taken upon this question, Krzycki, owing perhaps to his opposition to his mother's designs, would have cast his vote for Miss Anney.

After a certain time, it seemed to him that Miss Anney also was casting stealthy glances at him. He determined to catch her in the act and looked at her more openly. And then he saw something which astonished him in the highest degree. On the cheeks of the young Englishwoman tear after tear coursed. Her lips were compressed as if she desired to stifle her impressions and her hand, supported on his arm, did not cease to tremble.

"Either this is affected sensibility," Krzycki thought, "or else her English nerves are jangled. Why the deuce should she weep over a man whom she never saw in her life? Unless it reminded her of her father's burial or that of some near relative?"

Miss Anney did not look at all like a person with jangled nerves. Somehow, after a time, her emotion passed. She began to gaze with particular interest and attention upon

the throng of people, the neighborhood, the fields, and the distant fringe of the forest as if she desired to retain them all permanently in her memory.

"She should have taken a kodak with her," thought Ladislaus.

They were already not far from the cemetery gates. But in the meanwhile a wind stronger than the former gusts broke loose. It swept suddenly across the field of sprouting grain, raised a cloud of dust on the highway, snuffed out the mendicant candles which were not extinguished before, and entwined Krzycki's neck with Miss Anney's long boa.

She relinquished his arm and, freeing him from his ties, said in Polish with an almost imperceptible foreign accent:

"I beg your pardon. The wind — "

"That is nothing," answered Ladislaus. "Perhaps you would prefer to take a carriage, for the squalls are breaking out more frequently."

"No, thank you," she replied; "I believe we are near the cemetery. I will walk alone, because I must hold my boa and dress."

During this conversation they stood opposite each other for a moment and, although that moment was brief, Ladislaus made a new discovery. Not only did he confirm his previous opinion that Miss Anney was, in reality, very beautiful and had an extraordinarily transparent complexion, set off with light hair, but above all else that her blue eyes did not radiate with two separate beams, but rather with a single, gentle, blue, slightly misty, soulful light. He was unable to explain to himself in what lay the distinct and peculiar charm of that look, but he felt it perfectly.

In the meantime, they reached the cemetery. A short prayer detained all at the gates, after which the funeral cortege moved between the poplars, swung by the winds,

and crosses overgrown by luxuriant grass on the mounds, under which slept the Rzeslewo peasantry. The Zarnowski tomb stood in the centre. In its front walls could be seen an opening, knocked out for the reception of a new member of the family. At the side there were two masons, with whitened aprons, having at their feet prepared cement and a pile of new bricks. The coffin was placed upon the sand near the opening and the priests began a long chant over it. Their voices rose and then fell, like waves, in a rolling and dreamy rhythm, which was accompanied by the roar of the poplars, the flapping of the flags in the air, and the hum of prayers uttered, as if mechanically, by the peasants. Then the parish-priest of Rzeslewo began a discourse. As he did not live on good terms with the deceased, he commended his soul to the divine mercy rather than praised him. About could be seen the faces of the Zarnowski relatives, grave and appropriately grouped for the occasion, but no grief, not a tear. They were rather indifferent, with an expression of expectancy, and even tedium. The coffin appeared to be only awaiting the close of the rites, as if it was anxious to enter that vault and darkness, for which it was appropriately designed. In the meantime, after the sermon, songs began to ring. At moments they subsided, and then could be heard only the revelry of wind among the poplars. At last a high voice, as if startled, intoned "requiem aeternam" and fell suddenly like a pillar of dust twirled by the storm; and after a momentary silence "eternal repose," full of solace, resounded and the ceremony was over.

On the coffin they threw a few handfulls of sand, and then pushed it into the opening which the masons began to wall up, laying brick upon brick and coating them with mortar. The barrier, which was to forever separate Zarnowski from the world and light, grew with each moment. Groups of peasants slowly left the cemetery. Two

female neighbors from Gorek, a Pani Wlocek, an old and pathetic dame, and her daughter, who was not young, approached Pani Krzycki and felt it incumbent upon them to offer a "few words of consolation," which nobody expected and which were absolutely unnecessary. Gronski began to converse with Ladislaus:

"Observe," he quietly said, looking at the work of the masons, "yet a few more bricks and then, as Dante says, 'Aeterna silenza.' No sorrow, not a tear; no one will ever come here expressly for him. Something similar awaits me, and you remember that thus they bury old bachelors. Your mother is quite right in wanting to have you married."

"To tell the truth," answered Krzycki, "the deceased was not only an old bachelor, but also was unsocial. But finally, is it not all the same?"

"After death, certainly. But during life, when you think of it, it is not at all the same. This 'lust for posthumous grief' may be illogical and foolish, but nevertheless it exists."

"Whence does it come?"

"From an equally unwise desire to outlive self. Look, the work is finished and Zarnowski is sealed up. Let us go."

At the gates the rattle of the approaching carriages was heard. The party moved towards the exit. The ladies now were in the lead; after them the priests and guests walked, with the exception of Dolhanski, who was talking to the Englishwoman.

Suddenly Ladislaus turned to Gronski and asked:

"What is Miss Anney's Christian name?"

"While we are in the cemetery you might have thought of something else. Her Christian name is Agnes."

"A beautiful name."

"In England it is quite common."

"Is she rich?"

"And that question you could defer to another time, but if you are in a hurry, ask Dolhanski. He knows those things best."

"I ask you because I see him with her and hear him chattering in English."

"Oh, that is a play within a play! He is after Pani Otocka."

"Ah!"

"Equally as old as it is fruitless. For it is yet difficult to ascertain with any exactness how much Miss Anney possesses, while the amount which the late Director Otocki left his wife is perfectly known."

"I have a hope that my beautiful cousin will give him the mitten."

"Which would increase a beautiful collection. But tell me, what do you think of your cousins?"

"Certainly — Pani Otocka — certainly — both have what the Galicians call 'something ennobling.' But Panna Marynia is still quite a child."

Gronski directed his eyes at the slim and slender figure walking before them and said:

"That is a child who could as well fly in the air as walk on earth."

"An aëroplane or what?"

"I warn you that she is the object of my highest adoration."

"So I have heard. It is already known to all men."

"Only they do not know that that adoration is not of a red color, but heavenly blue."

"I do not understand that very well."

"When you are better acquainted with her you will understand me."

Krzycki, who was more interested in Miss Anney, wanted to turn the conversation to her, but they passed the gates,

before which the horses waited. The young man proceeded to assist the ladies to their seats, in which operation he saw directed towards himself for a moment the soulful eyes of the Englishwoman. Preparatory to her departure, his mother asked him whether he had finished his duties connected with the funeral and whether he would return immediately to Jastrzeb.

"No," he answered; "I have made an arrangement with the parish-priest that he should permit me to invite the priests to the rectory, and I must entertain them there. But as soon as I greet them and eat something, I will excuse myself to the guests and return as soon as possible."

Here he bowed to the ladies, after which he removed his hands from the carriage, cast a glance at the chestnut thill-horse to see if he did not overreach, and shouted:

"Go ahead!"

The carriage trundled over the road on which the funeral cortege had passed. Of the participants who were dressed in surtouts, besides Ladislaus, only Dolhanski remained. He felt that, as a relative of the deceased, it was also his duty to entertain the priests who officiated at the obsequies; and besides, he had other reasons which induced him to remain in Ladislaus' company.

They had barely settled in the britzska, when he began to look around among the peasants, who still stood here and there in groups, and then asked:

"Where is the notary Dzwonkowski?"

Ladislaus smiled and replied:

"He rode ahead with the priests, but to-night you will see him at Jastrzeb, for he invited himself there."

"So; then I regret that I did not return with the ladies. I wanted to wring from him some information regarding the will, and I thought that later that might not be possible."

"Patience. The notary told me that the will is to be

opened the day after to-morrow in his office and that we will have to drive over there for that purpose."

"But I wished to know to-day whether it will be worth while for me to wait until to-morrow or the day after. If this precious uncle of ours has let us drift, as the saying is, upon a swift current of water, then Pani Wlocka was right in offering us words of consolation. I, at least, will need them for a long time."

"How can you talk that way?"

"I am saying aloud what you all secretly think. I am very anxious about that will. I care more for Dzwonkowski at the present moment than for the entire terrestial globe together with the five parts of the world; and more particularly since I have seen that he brought a bundle of papers with him."

"As to that you may rest at ease. He is the greatest musico-maniac that I have ever met. He worships Panna Marynia, with whom he became acquainted at Krynica. From Gronski I have learnt that in the moonlight sonata, in the Benois arrangement for the violin, he arranged the notes for the flute and sent them to her in Warsaw. To-day he wants to see how they will go. Therefore he invited himself to Jastrzeb, and he brought with him, besides the sonata, a bundle of other notes. I assure you that he will not want to talk or speak of anything else."

"In that case, may the devils carry off Dzwonkowski's flute, Panna Marynia's violin, your Jastrzeb piano, and music in general."

On this Ladislaus looked at him spitefully and said:

"Be careful about our Jastrzeb piano, because if you hear a trio to-night, you will find Pani Otocka at the piano."

"I have a hope that it will be, at least, as much out of tune as I am at present and, in that case, I will not envy either her or the auditors. But I see that Gronski has filled you with idle gossip. Good! Unlike him, I do not

have an old bachelor's hankering after boarding-house misses and I like young teals only on a platter. Let him feast his eyes with his Marynia; let him pray to her, but let him leave me alone. They all have gone crazy on music there, and are ready to infect you in Jastrzeb. Only Miss Anney does not play on anything, and has a little sense."

"Ah, Miss Anney does not play on anything?"

"Yes. But that does not prevent her from playing, in a certain case, upon me or on you, but much more easily upon you than me."

"Why more easily upon me?"

"Because I am that particular kind of instrument that wants to know in advance how much the concert will bring."

Ladislaus, accustomed of old to Dolhanski's cynicism, shrugged his shoulders, but did not have time to reply as they had in the meantime arrived at the rectory.

III

Dolhanski, in fact, could not extract from the notary, anything but testy replies. Immediately after his reception at the rectory the old notary became very garrulous, but spoke with Ladislaus only about Marynia, for whom he had an unbounded admiration. At present he feared that Pani Krzycki might not consent to an evening musicale on the day of the funeral of a relative, and that fear did not cease to disturb him. Under this impression he began to demonstrate that music may as well be associated with death as with life; that impressive music always attends funerals, and that as mankind has not devised anything better than music, not even for the worship of God, therefore it may be taken for granted that music facilitates the flight of the soul to heaven, and even salvation. Ladislaus bit his mustache and, without qualification, concurred in this reasoning, knowing that the amiable old gentleman was wont to berate his opponents unmercifully. With this kind of talk, in which, to Dolhanski's great irritation, there was no mention of the will, they passed their time on the way to Jastrzeb. There they were served with tea. As the wind had subsided entirely before the setting sun and the evening was delightful, the ladies, with Gronski, were in the garden. When Ladislaus and his companions followed them, they found Pani Krzycki and Pani Otocka on the bank of the pond, while Miss Anney and Marynia were in a boat on the pond. A ruddy lustre permeated the whole air; the scent of elders, which grew near the water's edge, blended with the odor of the turf, duck-weed, and fish. The water was dark

green on the border from alders and willows which hemmed it in, but in the centre, on the overflow, it was golden, with reflections of purple and peacock feathers. The boat floated towards the point, whose narrow girdle from the garden side served as a landing-place. Marynia sat in the middle of the boat, but Miss Anney, standing at the stern, manipulated it with a single oar, propelling and at the same time steering with uncommon skill. On the background of water and sky she loomed up from head to foot with strong and graceful form, her rounded bosom moving in unison with the movements of the oar. At moments she ceased to paddle and when the boat, gliding each moment more slowly, at last stood still upon the smooth water, there could be seen in the mirrored pellucidness another boat, another Marynia, and another Miss Anney. In this picture there was great pastoral calm. The lustre in the heavens grew ruddier as if the entire western world had been embraced in a conflagration. High above the pond, under the flaming cupola of heaven, strings of wild ducks appeared as if tied together by black crosses.

The trees stood motionless and the silence was broken only by the sounds of the windmill, coming from the direction of the dam.

After a while Miss Anney touched shore. Gronski, who was anxious that his "adoration" should not wet her feet, hastened to assist her out of the boat, while the Englishwoman leaped unassisted upon the sand and, approaching the company, said:

"How charming it is here in Jastrzeb!"

"Because the weather is fine," said Ladislaus, drawing nearer. "Yesterday it was cloudy, but to-night it is beautiful."

And having scanned the heavens, he, like a true husbandman, added:

"If it will continue thus, we will start mowing the hay."

And Miss Anney gazed at him, as if she discovered something unusual in the sounds of those words, and began to repeat them in the same fashion that one repeats words which he desires to firmly implant in the memory.

"The hay — the hay."

The party turned towards the house, which was being bleached, or rather rouged, amidst the lime-trees, conversing a little about the funeral and the late Zarnowski, but more about the village, the spring evening, and music. Pani Krzycki assured the newly-arrived ladies that in Jastrzeb before their arrival music was not wanting, as there were so many nightingales in the park that at times they would not let any one sleep. At this Gronski, who was a man of great erudition, began to discourse upon country life; that, in truth, it was, from time immemorial, considered the only real and normal life. He mentioned incidentally the Homeric Kings, "who rejoiced in their hearts, counting sheaves with the sceptre," and various Roman poets. In conclusion he announced, as his opinion, that socialism will shatter to pieces upon agriculture and the soil, because it considers them only as a value, while they are also an affection, or, in other words, not only is a price placed upon them, but they are also loved. Men know what cares are coupled with country life, but in truth it is the only life they prize, as if in it "even bird's milk was not lacking." [1]

To Pani Krzycki, who, next to her children, loved, above everything else in the world, Jastrzeb, the words of Gronski appealed very convincingly, but Dolhanski, recalling a village he once owned and squandered, replied, drawling his words as usual:

"Bird's milk may not be lacking, but money is lacking.

[1] "Even bird's milk is not lacking," a Polish proverbial expression signifying "abundance," "living in clover."

Besides, it is amusing to hear these eulogies upon country life pronounced by a rich man who could buy for himself a tract of land and settle in the country, but whom it is necessary to pull out of the city with hooks." Then addressing Gronski:

"Apropos of your Homeric Kings, and with them your Virgils and Horaces, why, in their days there certainly were not such hotels on the Riviera and such clubs in Nice as at present."

But this observation was passed in silence, or rather it was interrupted by a musical passage intoned to Marynia in an old wooden voice by the notary who wanted in this manner to illustrate the junction of two phrases in Bruch's concerto. Afterwards various other phrases incessantly resounded until the party returned to the house. Gronski knew the mania of the old man and envied him for having found something in life which filled it out so completely for him. He was a highly educated dilettante, but had settled upon nothing permanently in life and did not consecrate all his spiritual powers to anything exclusively. This was partly due to his environment, and partly to his own fault. The profoundest essence of his soul was a sad scepticism. One of his friends, Kloczewski, called him "an ecclesiastic in a dress-suit." Somehow, the final result of Gronski's meditation upon the future and human life, individual as well as collective, was the conviction that the future and the human life may, with time, become different, but never better. So he thought that it might be worth while not to spare efforts to make them sometime better, but it would not be worth while that they should be different only. This thought protected him, however, from the bordering pessimism, as he understood that the measure of happiness and misfortune rested not on the external, but in the man himself, and that as long as otherwise did not mean *better*, then by the same reasoning

it did not also mean *worse*. At bottom he was persuaded that the one and the other were only a mistake and a delusion, and that everything, not excluding life, was one great vanity. In this manner, he revered, across the sea of ages, the true Ecclesia.

But, being at the same time a man of sentiment, he fell in a continual clash with himself, his sentiment always craving for something, while his sad scepticism iterated that it was not worth while to desire anything. His feelings were preyed upon by the thought that his views were in conflict with life, while life was an imperative necessity. Therefore, whoever with doubts corroded its roots injured humanity, and Gronski did not desire to injure anybody, much less his own people. For this reason the ecclesiastic, contending that all was vanity, wrangled within him, with the patriot who said, for instance, that national suffering was not in vain. But this state of affairs bred within him such incessant discord that he envied men of action who journey through life without any whys or wherefores, as well as people who absolutely succumb to one great feeling.

For the old notary and Marynia, such a great feeling was music; so that as often as Gronski saw them together, so often did he have before his eyes a living example that things do exist with which one can fill out his life from dawn until the last moments, — if only one does not subject them to a too close analysis.

IV

At the supper the aged notary was occupied solely with music and Marynia. To the others, with the exception of the lady of the house, upon whom permission for the concert depended, he replied irascibly; especially to Dolhanski, who several times tried to elicit from him some information about the will. His angry and apoplectic face cleared up only after Pani Krzycki announced that she would have no objections to devoting the remainder of the evening to decorous music, and that she herself would be glad to listen to Marynia, whom she had not heard since the last charitable concert in Krynica.

Towards the close of the supper the old gentleman again began to get impatient, remarking that it was a pity to waste time in eating, and discussing even music, if light and frivolous, with profane individuals who had no conception of the real art. He became more interested after listening to the reasonings of Gronski, who began to talk about the origin of music and refute the Darwinian theory that songs and the sounds of the primitive string instruments arose in some misty era of the human race from the amorous declarations and calls of men and women in the forests. Gronski shared the opinion of those who against these views cited the fact that among the most savage tribes no traces of love-songs exist, but in their place are found war-songs and martial music. The theory of calling through the forests appeared to the ladies more poetical. Gronski placated them with the statement that this did not lessen the civilizing importance of music, that it, with

the dance, was one of the first factors which promoted among the scattered tribes of men a certain organization.

"The Papuans," he said, "who gather together for the performance of a war or ceremonial dance in accordance with the rhythm of even their wildest music, by that act alone submit to something, introduce some kind of order, and form the first social ties."

"That means," observed Dolhanski, "that every nation owes its origin to some primitive 'high-diddle-diddle, the cat and the fiddle.'"

"Of course it is so," angrily answered the old notary.

Afterwards turning to Gronski, he said: "Please proceed. We can at least learn something."

"Yes, please proceed," repeated Marynia.

So Gronski began further to speak of the history of music; how through the entire course of ages it served war, ceremonies of state, as well as religious and secular, and how considerably later it outspread its own wings, on which it soars as at present, like an eagle, over the entire human race.

"A strange art," he concluded; "the most primitive; yet to-day resting more than any other upon science; the most precisely confined within certain technical requirements, as if bound by dams and dykes; yet the most illimitable, the most mystical; overflowing the borders of existence and life. Perhaps this gives it such incomprehensible power over the human soul; speaking the least expressive of tongues and at the same time the most idealistic. It is the most powerful spur to action. Yes, to the Polish regiments in the battle of Gravelotte the Prussian bands played 'Poland is not yet lost,' and everywhere you may behold the same. Play to the Frenchmen the 'Marseillaise,' the Germans 'Wacht am Rhein,' how their hands begin to quiver! Even the eyes of phlegmatic Englishmen and Americans sparkle when they hear

'Rule Britania' or 'Yankee Doodle.' Strange art! — the most cosmopolitan and at the same time the most national, — universal and individual."

"One thing you did not say and that is that of all arts it is the purest," added Pani Otocka.

"Attempts have been made to illegitimatize it," answered Gronski, "but licentiousness never can be rhythmical nor harmonical, and for that reason from these attempts there was born an antichrist of music."

But Ladislaus, who was a trifle bored and would have preferred to talk with the light-haired Miss Anney, spoke out with the evident desire to close the discussion.

"Yes, it is plain that not only every nation but every man has his own music. I, for instance, am always willing to hear a concert or an opera, but I admit, that when sometimes the boys and girls at work in the field sing until the pitchforks and harrows ring, that is the only music for me."

"Slavonian, Lechite, Piast — come to my arms," drawled Dolhanski.

Ladislaus blushed a little from fear that the young Englishwoman and his refined female relatives might judge him too rustical, but they glanced at him with a certain sympathy. Only the beard of the old classical notary drooped with his nose in a manner boding no good, and from his lips he mumbled a half-distinct grumble:

"To some folks it is sufficient, when anything jingles in their ears."

But recollecting that it would not be agreeable to Pani Krzycki if caustic remarks were directed against her son, he cast an uneasy look at her and became silent.

The supper was finished. The company went to the salon in which prevailed coolness and the slight scent of jasmine blown in from the garden by the light evening breezes before the windows were closed. In the glass

doors appeared the big full moon, which but recently arose slowly in the heaven, still ruddy after a bath in the evening twilight. Pani Otocka sat at the piano; beside her the notary began to blow, as if with anger, into the flute; while behind them stood Marynia with a violin at her shoulder. Gronski with rapture gazed at her luxuriant dark hair; her peaceful, arched eyebrows under a forehead plainly immaculate; her small countenance; her slender, growing, childlike form, and thought that this sight alone would suffice for music, or at least that such a violinist might pass for its incarnation and symbol. Ladislaus, although he had previously enlisted in the ranks of the English faction, could not remove his eyes from her. After completing his university education, he had accompanied his mother on a journey to Italy. He visited various galleries and, though he lacked solid artistic culture, nevertheless the thought crossed his mind that this maiden with the bright and peaceful countenance, bending over the violin, might have served the old masters as a model for Saint Cecilia or for one of those angelic violin-players which he had seen in the paintings of Fra Angelico.

The other listeners, like Pani Krzycki, her children, the instructress, and Miss Anney, gazed at her as if at a miracle-working image. Only one, Laskowicz, young Stas' tutor, did not share in the general rapture. He was a medical student who, owing to the closing of the university, was earning money by teaching for the further pursuit of his studies, and he found himself, together with his inexorable hatred for the "pampered" of this world, like Pilate in Credo, in this country home. His convictions by this time were not a secret to anybody in Jastrzeb; he was tolerated, however, with that improvident indulgence of which the Polish nobility is only capable, upon the principle that "the greatest radical must eat," and also in the hope that Stas was yet too young to be infected with the "evil spirit" by his tutor.

To Laskowicz, when he looked at the gentle young lady, it seemed that she was a flower which grew higher than the hands of a proletaire could reach; therefore she was bred to the injury of the proletariat. This was sufficient for him to look on both sides with reluctance and a readiness to hate.

But, in the meanwhile, the moment for beginning the concert had arrived. For some time Marynia had been drawing the bow over the chords, turning the ringlets of the violin, and passing her fingers over the notes, indicating something to her sister and the notary; afterwards silence ensued, interrupted only by the indistinct talk of the servants, assembled beyond the windows, who for the first time in their lives were to hear the young lady play on the violin.

V

THE first chords of the moonlight sonata are sounded and a vision begins. Lo! a pale ray creeps stealthily through a crevice and touches the forehead of a sleeper, as if it wanted to arouse thought; afterwards the lips, as if it wished to waken words, and later the bosom, as if it desired to stir the heart. But the weary body slumbered in a heavy sleep. In its place the soul emerges from its embrace, like a butterfly from a cocoon, and flies into space. The night is bright and silent. Below, alders are dimly wrapped in muslin mists. On the sylvan meadows nymphs dance their rites, accompanied by the playing of a faun on a flute. About, stand with flaming azure eyes, stags, crowned with antlers. On the heath, glow-worms glimmer; on the moss, phosphorate toadstools, under whose canopies tiny elfs watch the gambols. From the decaying vegetation and fens rise Jack-o'-lanterns which flit about lightly and mysteriously, as if seeking something in vain. The moon ascends each moment higher and higher, and bounteous dew falls.

Over the vast fields rivers wind in silvery ribbons and tracks of the roadways can be seen leading to towns and castles. Through the narrow Gothic windows the moon's lustre invades silent castle-halls, where lurk the ghosts of dead knights and maidens. At the feet of the castles, cities slumber. In the calm light the roofs of houses whiten and crosses on the towers glitter. From the blossoming orchards, with the vapors rises the fragrance of flowers and grass. But lighter than the fragrance and the moonlight the winged soul soars higher and farther. The lowly

habitations of men vanish; likewise vanish the forests, vales, sparkling shields of ponds, and the white threads of streams. Gradually lofty regions are attained.

And lo, the mountains! Amidst the crags sleeps the translucent buckler of the lake. In the chasms lies concealed cool dusk. The needles of the glaciers shine verdantly. On the declivities and rocky nests rest the weary clouds and mists; and on the peaks, on the eternal snow the moonlight reposes. Even the wind has fallen asleep. How still, ethereal, and immense! Here the moon is the only sentinel of silence and the human soul the only living entity. Free as a mountain eagle, detached from the flesh, enamoured with the expanse, desolation, and silence, happy, and sad with a supernal sorrow, dissolved in the stillness, she hovers and courses above the precipices; and again flies farther on, entirely abandoned to pleasure, flight, and speed.

And the mountains have already disappeared beneath her and lo! some voices rise and reach from below as if summoning her to them. It is the sea. It, alone, never sleeps; restless and vast, it dashes wave after wave against the shore, as if it were an immense pulsation of life. Its monstrous lungs heave and fall eternally and at times groan in complaint of endless toil.

The ruffled expanse of the sea throbs with the opalescent lunar lustre and the silvery laces of stars, and on those illuminated tracks, in the distance appears, wakeful as the sea itself, a ship with sails and a sanguinary light in the rounded windows.

But thou, oh soul, mountest higher and higher. Already the earth is left somewhere at the bottom of the abyss. Thou, light as down, dost pass feathery clouds,

which have strayed upon the heights and dost pierce space flooded with splendor — empty and cool. There thou liest upon thine own wings and floatest about in luminous nothingness; higher and higher; and now doth scintillate and change color over thee, in gold and purple, the jewels of heaven, and thou dost frolic and swing in the unattainable ether, serene, freed from the dross of matter as if, beyond the limits of time and space, thou wert already partly admitted into heaven.

The firmament of heaven grows each moment darker, but the moon, great as the world, shines more and more brightly. Already we behold her glistening plains, mangled, wild, studded by mountain peaks, perforated with the blackness of craters, bleak, frosty, and lifeless. Thus in the abyss of space appears this silvery, corpse-like wanderer, who speeds around the earth as if condemned by a divine command to a perpetual race. Above and about her, an immensity which the swooning brain is incapable of comprehending. A new galaxy of stars twinkle sanguinarily and powerfully, like distant fire-places. The music of spheres is heard. Here Eternity fans with her breath and a supernal chill prevails.

Return, over-indulged swan, return, oh soul, before some occult rapids and whirlpools seize thee and tear thee forever from the earth.

Thou returnest from the pinnacle of all-existence, bathed in the waves of infinity, purer and more perfect. Lo, thou furlest thy wings! Look, in the depths beneath are those downy, light clouds, which now thou greetest as thine own and kin. Below, the earth. The protuberances of the mountains flash to the moon; at their feet sobs the sea. And now lower, the vague outlines of forests,

enveloped in mist. Again whiten the cities, silent towers and roofs of villages sunk in sleep. The night grows pale. On the moors, ostlers build fires and play on fifes. The roosters crow. The day breaks. It is dawn.

The strains subsided and silence ensued. Marynia stood near the piano with a countenance, composed as usual, but seemingly, awakened from a dream.

The aged notary sat for a while with bowed head, moving his toothless jaws; afterwards he rose, and when the young maid placed the violin beside the key-board, he ardently kissed her hands; after which he threw a challenging look at those present as if he sought the person who would dare to protest against that mark of homage or deem it a superfluous act. Nobody, however, protested because under the enchantment of that music that happened with the listeners which always happens with mankind, when fanned by the breath of genius. As sometimes in a dream it seems to a person that having shoved himself off the earth with his feet, he afterwards reels a long time in the air, so, too, their bodies became lighter, less material, as if deprived of those heavy and gross elements which bound them to the earth. Their nerves became more susceptible and subtle and their souls more volatile, approaching more closely those boundaries on which eternity begins. It was an unconscious feeling; after the passage of which the daily life was to encompass and drag them down. But during this momentary exaltation there awakened within them, unknown to themselves, a power of apprehending, appreciating, and feeling beauty, and in general such things as in their customary moods they had not felt and did not know that they could have felt.

Even the young and unfledged physician, Laskowicz, notwithstanding all his prejudices, could not resist this influence. The moment when Marynia stood up to play,

he began to scrutinize her from his dark corner in the salon and examine her form as an anatomist. He was conscious that there was something brutal in this, but such a viewpoint gave him satisfaction, as being proper for an investigator and a man of his convictions. He started to persuade himself that this young lady of the so called higher spheres was for him merely an object which one should examine in the same manner as a corpse on the dissecting-table is examined. So, when tuning her violin, she bent her head, he took a mental inventory of the Latin names of all her cranial bones, repelling the thought which, against his will, rushed to his head that this was, however, an extraordinarily noble skull. Afterwards, during the first moments after the beginning of the concert, he became occupied with the nomenclature of the muscles of her hands, arms, breast, limbs, outlined under her dress and whole figure. But as he was not only a medical student and a socialist, but also a young man, this anatomical review ended in the conclusion that this was a girl, not yet sufficiently developed, but exceedingly pretty and attractive, resembling a spring flower. From that moment he began, to a certain extent, to forgive her connection with spheres living "from the wrongs of the proletariat," and could not get rid of the thought that if, as a result of some unheard-of social upheaval, such "a saintly doll" became dependent upon his favor or disfavor, then such a state of affairs would bring to him an indescribably coy delight.

But when Beethoven placed his hands upon his head, there awakened within him better and higher instincts. He saw during the performance the lips and eyebrows of the young lady contract, and began to concede that "she, however, felt something." In consequence of this, his ill-will towards her began to melt away, although slowly and with difficulty. He half confirmed, half conjectured that

not only the hands but also the soul played. He did not have sufficient culture for music to appeal to him as it did, for instance, to Gronski, nevertheless there awakened within him a certain dismal consciousness that this was something, like the air, which all breasts can breathe, regardless of whether they love or hate. Amazement seized him at the thought that there were things lying beyond the swarm of human passions. At the conclusion he so identified music with the figure of the playing girl that when the old notary, at the end of the concert, kissed her hands, he almost felt inclined to do the same.

In the meanwhile, Ladislaus said to Miss Anney:

"As long as Jastrzeb has been Jastrzeb, never yet has such music been heard. I am not a connoisseur, but must admit that this has captivated me. Besides, though I am often in the city, it has always so happened that I never have had an opportunity of seeing a woman play on the violin. And this is so beautiful that I now have an impression that only women should play the violin."

"One gets such an impression when he hears Marynia play."

"Assuredly. I even begin to understand Pan Gronski. You, of course, know that she is his adoration?"

"The greatest in the world. And mine and everybody's who knows her, — and soon she will be yours."

"I do not deny that she will be, only I doubt whether she will be the greatest."

A temporary pause in the conversation followed, after which Ladislaus, not desiring that Miss Anney should take his words as an untimely compliment, added:

"In any event, I owe her gratitude for music which is slightly different from that which we hear every evening in spring and summer."

"What kind of music is that?"

"From dusk to moon-rise the orchestra of frogs, and

afterwards the concert of nightingales, which, after all, I do not hear, as, after daily toil, I am sound asleep. The frog band has already commenced. This also has its charm. If you care to hear it, let us go out upon the veranda. The night is almost as warm as in summer."

Miss Anney rose and together they went on the veranda, which the servants, who listened under the windows to Marynia's performance, had already left, and only in the distance the blooming jasmines, shaded by the dusk, whitened. From the pond came the croakings of the confederation of frogs, drowsy and, at the same time, resembling choral prayers.

Miss Anney for a while listened to these sounds and afterwards said:

"Yes, this also has its charm, particularly on a night like this."

"Are not nights the same in England?"

"No, not as quiet. There is hardly a corner there to which the whistling of locomotives or the factory noises do not reach. I like your villages for their quiet and their distance from the cities."

"So, then, this is not the first time that you have seen a Polish village?"

"No. I have passed the last month with Zosia Otocka."

"I wish that our Jastrzeb would find favor in your eyes. It is too bad that you chanced here upon a funeral. That is always sad. I saw that you were even affected."

"It reminded me of something," answered Miss Anney.

Whereupon, evidently desiring to change the subject of the conversation, she again began to peer into the depths of the garden.

"How everything blooms and smells agreeably here!"

"Those are jasmines and elders. Did you observe on the forest road, riding to Jastrzeb, that the edges of the woods are planted with elders? That is my work."

"I only observed it at the bridge, where an old building stands. What kind of building is that?"

"That is an ancient mill. At one time there was a great deal of water in the stream beside it, but later my uncle, Zarnowski, drained it off to the fish-ponds in Rzeslewo and the mill stood still. Now it is a ramshackle building in which for over ten years we have stored hay instead of keeping it in hayricks. Folks say that the place is haunted, but I myself circulated, in its time, that myth."

"Why?"

"First, so that they should not steal the hay, and again because it was of much concern to me that no one should pry in there."

"What an invention!"

"I told them that near the bridge during night-time the horses get frightened and that something in the mill laughs; which is true, because owls laugh there."

"Perhaps it would have been better to have told them that something in there weeps."

"Why?"

"For greater effect."

"I do not know. Laughter in the night in the solitude creates a greater impression. People fear it more."

"And nobody peeps in there?"

"Not a soul. Now, if they only would not steal the hay, it would be all the same to me, but at that time I was anxious to screen myself from the eyes of men — "

Here Ladislaus bit his tongue, observing in the moonlight that Miss Anney's eyebrows frowned slightly. He understood that in repeating twice that it was important to him that no one should pry into the mill, he committed a breach of etiquette and, what was worse, had presented himself to the young English lady as some provincial boaster, who gives the impression that often he has been

forced to seek various hiding-places. So desiring to erase the bad impression, he added quickly:

"When a student, I wrote verses and for that reason sought solitude. But now all that has passed away."

"That usually passes away," answered Miss Anney. And she turned to the doors of the salon, but without unnecessary haste, as if she desired to show Ladislaus that she accepted as good coin his explanations and that her return was not a manifestation of displeasure. He remained a while, angry at himself and yet more angry at Miss Anney for the simple reason that the indiscretion was committed solely by him and he could not blame her for anything.

"In any case," he said to himself, "that is some deucedly penetrating Puritan."

And he began to repeat, with some indignation, her last words:

"That usually passes away."

"Did she," he thought, "intend to give me to understand that from such grist as is in me nobody could bake any poetry. Perhaps it is true, and I know that better than anyone else, but it is unnecessary for anybody to corroborate the fact."

Under the influence of these thoughts he returned to the salon in not quite good humor, but there the duties of host summoned him to his feminine cousins and that evening he did not converse any more with Miss Anney.

VI

THE notary left the same night because his official duties required his presence in the city the following morning. On the day after, Gronski, whom Pani Otocka requested to act as her representative, with Ladislaus and Dolhanski departed for the notarial bureau. All three were troubled and curious about the will, of which the notary did not drop a single hint. Dolhanski feigned a jocose mien and displayed more sangfroid than he really possessed. He was most anxious that something should "drop off" for him. He was a man who had squandered a large fortune, but, not having changed his habits, kept on living as if he had not lost anything. Therefore he sustained himself upon the surface of life by the aid of extraordinary, almost acrobatic, efforts, of which after all he made no secret. In general, he was a sponger and possessed a million faults, but also certain social qualities for which he was esteemed. Belonging to an aristocratic club, he played cards with unusual good luck, but irreproachably. He never borrowed money from people in his own sphere; never gossiped, and was a tolerably loyal friend. Lack of education he supplied with cleverness and a certain intellectual grasp. He jested about himself, but it was unsafe to jest at him, because he possessed, besides wit, a certain candor which bordered upon cynicism. So he was not only countenanced but willingly received. Gronski, for whom Dolhanski had such high regard that he permitted him alone to jest about him, said that if Dolhanski only had as great a gift of making money as he had of spending it, he would have been a millionaire.

But while waiting for such a change, heavy moments fell upon Dolhanski, particularly in spring when the play at the club slackened or when the outing season began. Then he felt fatigued after the winter struggles and sighed for something to turn up which would not require any labor. The will of Zarnowski might be such a gratuity, although Dolhanski did not expect much, as during the lifetime of the deceased he did nothing to deserve it. He even frankly repeated that his precious uncle bored him. He reckoned, however, that something might be sliced off for him; enough for the temporary pacification of his creditors or, better still, for a trip to a fashionable, aristocratic French seaside resort.

Before leaving Warsaw he announced in the club that he would return sitting upon a pillow stuffed with pawn-tickets. At present he attempted, with a certain affected humor, to convince Gronski and Ladislaus that by rights neither Pani Otocka with her sister, nor the Krzyckis, but himself ought to be the chief beneficiary.

"One of the female cousins," he said, "is a warm widow, who has a fat fortune from her husband, and the other is a budding muse, who ought to be satisfied with ambrosia. What a pity, that I am not the sole relative of the deceased!"

Here he addressed Ladislaus:

"The Krzyckis, I think, need not be considered, because you have had, as I heard, a dispute about the Rzeslewo boundary. I hope that you will not get anything."

"What is the use of your hoping?" said Gronski. "Limit, above all things, your wants."

"You remind me of my lamented father," answered Dolhanski.

"He certainly must have repeated that to you often."

"Too often, and besides, he set himself up as an example, but I demonstrated to him, as plainly as two times two are

four, that I could and ought to live on a higher scale than he."

"What did you tell him?"

"I spoke to him thus: Firstly, Papa has a son, while I am childless, and again, I am a better noble than he."

"In what respect?"

"Very plainly, since I can count one generation more in my line of nobility."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Krzycki. "What did your father say to that?"

"He called me a dunce, but I saw he was pleased with it. Ah, if my conceits would only please Pani Otocka as they once did Papa. But I am convinced that my constancy and my appetite will avail me naught. My dear cousin is after all more practical than she seems. You would imagine that both sisters live only on the fragrance of flowers; and yet when they learned of a possible inheritance, they hastily arrived at Jastrzeb."

"I can assure you that you are mistaken. Mother invited them last year while in Krynica and now, at least a week before the death of Uncle Zarnowski, she reminded them of their promise. They wrote back that they could not come because they had a guest. Then mother invited the guest also."

"If that is so, it is different. Now, not only do I understand your mother, but as you are a shapely youth and, in addition, younger than myself, I begin to fear for Cousin Otocka's fortune, which more justly belongs to me."

"You need have no fear," answered Krzycki drily.

"Does that mean that you prefer pounds to roubles? Considering the rate of exchange, I would prefer them also, but I fear that too many of them might have sunk in the Channel on the way from England."

"If you are so much concerned about that," said Gronski,

"you might ask Miss Anney about the precise amount. She is so sincere that she will reply to a certainty."

"Yes, but it is necessary that I should believe her."

"If you knew a little of human nature, you ought to believe her."

"In any case, I would fear a misunderstanding; for if she answered me in Polish, she could make a mistake, and if in English, I might not understand her perfectly."

"She speaks better Polish than you do English."

"I admit that this astonishes me. Whence?"

"Have n't I told you," answered Gronski, with some impatience, "that she was taught from childhood, because her father was an Englishman who had great sympathy for the Poles?"

"De gustibus non est disputandem," answered Dolhanski.

And afterwards he again began to speak of the deceased and of the old notary, mimicking the movements of his toothless jaws and the fury of his look; and finally he announced that if something was not "sliced off" for him he would either shoot himself upon Pani Otocka's threshold or else would drive over to Gorek and offer himself for the hand of Panna Wlocek.

But Gronski was buried in thought about something else during the time of this idle talk, while Ladislaus heard him distractedly as his attention was attracted by the considerable number of peasant carts which they were continually passing by. Supposing that he had forgotten some market-day in the city, he turned to his coachman.

"Andrew," he asked, "why are there so many carts on the road to the city?"

"Ah, those, please your honor, are Rzeslewo peasants."

"Rzeslewo? What have they to do there?"

"Ah! please your honor, on account of the will of the deceased Pan Zarnowski; it is to give them Rzeslewo."

Krzycki turned to Gronski.

"I heard," he said, "that somebody circulated among them such a story, but did not think that they would believe it."

And afterwards again to the coachman:

"Who told them that?"

The old driver hesitated somewhat in his reply:

"The people gossip that it was the Tutor."

Ladislaus began to laugh.

"Oh, stupid peasants!" he said. "Why, he never in his life saw Pan Zarnowski. How would he know about the will?"

But after a moment of meditation he said, partly to his companions and partly to himself:

"Everything must have some object, so if Laskowicz did that, let some one explain to me why he did it."

"Do you suspect him of it?" asked Gronski.

"I do not know, for heretofore I had assumed that one could be a socialist and keep his wits in order."

"Ah, so he is a bird of that nest? Tell me how long has he been with you and what manner of a man is he?"

"He has been with us half a year. We needed an instructor for Stas and some one recommended him to us. We were informed that he would have to leave Warsaw for a certain time to elude the police and, in fact, for that reason received him more eagerly, thinking that some patriotic matter was involved. Later, when it appeared that he was of an entirely different calibre, mother would not permit his dismissal in hope that she might convert him. At the beginning she had lengthy heart-to-heart talks with him and requested me to be friendly with him. We treated him as a member of the family, but the result has been such that he hates us, not only as people belonging to a sphere which he envies, but also, as it seems, individually."

"It is evident," said Dolhanski, "he holds it evil of you

that you are not such as he imagined you would be; neither so wicked nor so stupid. And you may rest assured that he will never forgive that in you."

"That may be so. In any case, he will shortly despise us from a distance, for after a month we part. I understand that one can and ought to tolerate all convictions, but there is something in him, besides his principles and hatreds, which is so conflicting with all our customs, and something so strange that we have had enough of him."

"My Laudie," answered Dolhanski, "do not necessarily apply this to yourself, for I speak generally, but since you have mentioned toleration, I will tell you that in my opinion toleration in Poland was and is nothing else than downright stupidity, and monumental stupidity at that."

"In certain respects Dolhanski is right," answered Gronski. "It may be that in the course of our history we tolerated various ideas and elements not only through magnanimous forbearance, but also because in our indolence we did not care to contend with them."

To this Ladislaus, who did not like to engage in general argumentation, said:

"That is all right, but all that does not explain why Laskowicz should spread among the peasants the news that Uncle Zarnowski devised Rzeslewo to them."

"There is, as yet, no certainty that he did," answered Gronski. "We will very soon learn the truth at the notary's."

VII

THE hour was five in the afternoon. The ladies sat on the veranda, at tea, when the young men returned from the city. Miss Anney rose when they appeared and, not wishing to be present, as a stranger, at the family conversation, left on some pretext for her room. Pani Krzycki greeted them with slightly affected calm, because in reality the thought of the will did not leave her for a moment. She was not greedier than the generality of common mortals, but she was immensely concerned that, after her demise, at the distribution of the estate, Ladislaus should have enough to pay off the younger members of the family and to sustain himself at Jastrzeb. And some respectable bequest would in a remarkable manner facilitate the making of such payments. Besides, at the bottom of the noble soul of Pani Krzycki there lay hidden the faith that Providence owed, to a certain extent, greater obligations to the Krzycki family than to any ordinary family. For that reason, even if the whole of Rzeslewo fell to the lot of that family, she would with readiness and willingness submit to such a decree of Providence. Finally, descending from the blood of a people who in certain cases can sacrifice fortune, but love extraordinarily to acquire it without any effort, she fondled all day the thought that such an easy acquisition was about to occur.

But in the countenances of Ladislaus and Gronski she could at once discern that they brought specific intelligence. Dolhanski, who was the first to alight from the carriage, was the first to begin the report.

"I anticipate the question, what is the news?" he said.

drawling his expressions with cold irony, "and I answer everything is for the best, for the Rzeslewo Mats and Jacks will have something with which they can travel to Carlsbad."

Pani Krzycki grew somewhat pale and, turning to Gronski, asked:

"What, in truth, gentlemen, have you brought with you?"

"The will in its provisions is peculiar," answered Gronski, "but was executed in a noble spirit. Rzeslewo is devised for a peasants' agricultural school and the interest of the funds is to be devoted to sending the pupils of the school, who have finished their courses, for a year's or two years' practice in country husbandry in Bohemia."

"Or, as I stated, to Carlsbad, Marienbad, Teplitz, and other places of the same character," explained Dolhanski.

A moment of silence followed. Marynia, who was pouring the tea, began, with teapot in hand, to gaze with inquiring look at those present, desiring evidently to unriddle whether they praised or condemned it and whether it gave them pleasure or annoyance. Pani Otocka looked at Gronski with eyes which evinced delight; while Pani Krzycki leaned with both hands upon the cane which she used owing to rheumatism in her limbs, and after a certain time asked in a slightly hoarse voice:

"So, it is for a public purpose?"

"Yes," answered Gronski, "the organization of the school and afterwards the division of the funds for the stay in Bohemia is to be assumed by a special Directory of the Trust Society of this province, and the designated curator of the school is Laudie."

"Too bad it is not I," interposed Dolhanski. "I would arrange it very quickly."

"There are specific bequests," continued Gronski, "and these are very strange. He bequeaths various small

sums to the household servants and ten thousand roubles to some Skibianka, daughter of a blacksmith at the Rzeslewo manor, who in his time emigrated to America."

"Skibianka!" repeated Pani Krzycki with astonishment.

Dolhanski bit off the ends of his mustache, smiled, and started to grumble that the nobility was always distinguished for its love of the common people, but Gronski looked at him severely; after which he drew from his pocket a memorandum and said:

"That provision of the will is worded as follows: Whereas the parents of Hanka Skiba or Skibianka emigrated during my sojourn abroad for medical treatment, and I have not had the opportunity of ascertaining where they can be found, therefore I obligate my relative, Ladislaus Krzycki, to cause to be published in all the Polish newspapers printed in the United States and in Parana, advertisements. If the said legatee does not within two years appear to receive the bequest, the entire sum with interest becomes the property of the said Ladislaus Krzycki."

"And I already have announced that I do not intend to accept that specific bequest," cried the young man excitedly.

All eyes were turned toward him; he added:

"I would not think of it; I would not think of it."

"Why not?" asked his mother after a while.

"Because I cannot. Let us suppose that the legatee appears, say for instance, within three years instead of two, what would happen? Would I pocket the bequest and drive her away? No! I could not do that. Finally, there are other considerations of which I do not wish to speak."

In fact, only by these "other considerations," could such a considerable bequest to a simple village girl be

explained; therefore Pani Krzycki became silent. After a while she said:

"My Laudie, nobody will coerce, nor even try to persuade you to accept."

But Dolhanski asked:

"Tell me, is this some mythical disinterestedness or is it ill humor caused by your not receiving a greater bequest?"

"Do not judge by yourself," answered Krzycki; "but I will tell you something which you certainly will not believe; since this estate is to be devoted to such an object as a peasants' agricultural school, I am highly delighted and have much greater esteem for the deceased. I give you my word that I speak with entire sincerity."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Pani Otocka, "it is pleasant to hear that."

Pani Krzycki looked with pride first upon her son, then upon Pani Otocka; and, though a feeling of disappointment lingered in her heart, said:

"Well, let there be a peasants' school, if only our Jastrzeb peasants will be permitted to send their sons to it."

"That does not admit of any doubt," explained Gronski. "There will be as many pupils as accommodations can be provided for. They may come from all parts, though preference is to be given to Rzeslewo peasants."

"What do they say about the bequest?"

"There were more than a dozen of them at the opening of the will, as they expected a direct gift of all the manor lands to them. Somebody had persuaded them that the deceased left everything to them to be equally divided. So they left very much displeased. We heard them say that this was not the genuine will and that they do not need any schools."

"Most fully do I share their opinion," said Dolhanski, "and in this instance, contrary to my nature, I will speak seriously. For at present there is raging an epidemic of

founding schools and no one asks for whom, for what, how are they to be taught in them, and what is the end to be attained. I belong to that species of birds who do not toil, but look at everything, if not from the top, then from the side, and, perhaps for that very reason, see things which others do not observe. So, at times, I have an impression that we are like those children, for instance, at Ostend, who build on the sea-shore forts with the sand. Every day on the beach they erect them and every day the waves wash them away until not a trace of them remains."

"In a way you are right," said Gronski; "but there, however, is this difference: the children build joyfully and we do not."

Afterwards he meditated and added:

"However, the law of nature is such that children grow while the adults rear dykes, not of sand, but of stone upon which the waves dash to pieces."

"Let them be dashed to pieces as quickly as possible," exclaimed Ladislaus.

But Dolhanski would not concede defeat.

"Permit me then," he said, "since we have not yet grown up and have not yet started to build of stone, to remain a pessimist."

Gronski gazed for a while into the depths of the garden like a man who was pondering over something and then said:

"Pessimism — pessimism! We hear that incessantly nowadays. But in the meanwhile if there exists anything more stupid than optimism, which often passes for folly, it is particularly pessimism, which desires to pose as reason."

Dolhanski smiled a trifle biliously and, turning to the ladies, said, pointing to Gronski:

"Do not take this ill of him, ladies. It often happens for him in moments of abstraction to utter impertinences.

He is a good — even intelligent — man, but has the unbearable habit of turning over everything, examining it from all sides, pondering over it, and soliloquizing."

But Marynia suddenly flushed with indignation in defence of her friend and, shaking the teapot which at that moment she held in her hand, began to speak with great ardor:

"That is just right, that is just sensible; that is what everybody ought to do — "

Dolhanski pretended to be awe-stricken and, bowing his head, cried:

"I am vanquished; I retreat and surrender arms."

Gronski, laughing, kissed her hand, while she, abashed at her own vehemence and covered with blushes, began to ask:

"Is it not the truth? Am I not right?"

But Dolhanski already recovered his presence of mind.

"That does not prove anything," he said.

"Why?"

"Because Gronski once promulgated this aphorism: It is never proper to follow the views of a woman, especially if by accident she is right."

"I?" exclaimed Gronski. "Untangle yourself from me. I never said anything like that. Do not believe him, ladies."

"I believe only you, sir," answered Marynia.

But further conversation was interrupted by Pani Krzycki, who observed that it was time for the May mass. In the Jastrzeb manor-house, there was a room especially assigned for that purpose and known as the chapel. At the main wall, opposite the windows, stood an altar with a painting of the Divine Mother of Czestochowo. The walls, altar, painting, and even the candles were decorated with green garlands. On the side tables stood bouquets of elders and jasmines whose fragrance filled the entire

room. Sometimes, when the rector of Rzeslewo arrived, he conducted the services; in his absence the lady of the house. All the inmates of the house, with the exception of Laskowicz, during the entire month of May met every evening in the chapel. At present the gentlemen followed the ladies. On the way Ladislaus asked Gronski:

"Is Miss Anney a Catholic?"

"To tell you the truth, I do not know," answered Gronski, "but it seems — but look, she is entering also. So she must be a Catholic. Perhaps her name is Irish."

In the chapel the candles were already lit, though the sun had not entirely set and stood in the windows, low, golden, and ruddy, casting a lustre on the white cloth which covered the altar and on the heads of the women. At the very altar the lady of the house knelt, behind her the lady visitors; after them the female servants and the old asthmatic lackey, while the gentlemen stood at the wall between the windows. The customary songs, prayers, and litanies began. Their sweetness struck Gronski. There was in them something of spring and at the same time of the evening. The impression of the spring was created by the flowers, and of the evening by ruddy lustre entering through the windows, and the soft voices of the women who, repeating the choral words of the litanies, reminded one of the last chirp of birds, subsiding before the setting of the sun. "Healer of the sick, Refuge of sinners, Comforter of the afflicted," repeated Pani Krzycki; and those soft, subdued voices responded, "Pray for us," — and thus did that country home pray on that May evening. Gronski, who was a sceptic, but not an atheist, like a man of high culture, at first felt the æsthetic side of this childlike "good-night" borne by these women to a benign deity. Afterwards, as if desiring to corroborate the truth of Dolhanski's assertion that he was wont to turn over every subject on every side and to ponder

over every phenomenon, he began to meditate upon religious manifestations. It occurred to him that this homage rendered to a deity was an element purely ideal, possessed solely by humanity. He recalled that as often as he happened to be in church and saw people praying, so often was he struck by the unfathomable chasm which separates the world of man from the animal world. As a matter of fact, religious conceptions can only be formed by higher and more perfect organisms; therefore he drew the conclusion that if there existed beings ten times more intelligent than mankind, they would, in their own way, be ten times more religious. "Yes, but in their own way," Gronski repeated, "which perhaps might be very different." His spiritual drama (and he often thought that there were many people like him) was this: that the Absolute appeared to him as an abyss, as some synthetic law of all the laws of existence. Thus he presumed that according to a degree of mental development it was impossible to imagine that law in the form of the kindly old man or in the eye on the radiant triangle, unless one takes matters symbolically and assumes that the old man and the eye express the all-basis of existence, as the horizontally drawn eight denotes infinity. But in such case what will this all-basis be for him? Always night, always an abyss, always something inscrutable; barely to be felt by some dull sensation and not by any clear perception, from whose power can be understood the phenomenon of existence and an answer be made to the various whys and wherefores. "Mankind," mused Gronski, "possesses at the same time too much and too little intelligence. For, after all, to simply believe one must unreservedly shut the blinds of his intellectual windows and not permit himself to peer through them; and when he does open them he discovers only a starless night." For this reason he envied those middle-aged persons, whose intelligence reared

mentally edifices upon unshaken dogmas, just as light-houses are built upon rocks in the sea. Dante could master the whole field of knowledge of his time and yet, notwithstanding this, could traverse hell, purgatory, and paradise. The modern man of learning could not travel thus, for if he wished to pass in thought beyond the world of material phenomenon, he would see that which we behold in Wuertz's well-known painting, a decapitated head; that is, some element so undefined that it is equivalent to nothing.

But the tragedy, according to Gronski, lay not only in the inscrutability of the Absolute, in the impossibility of understanding His laws, but also in the impossibility of agreeing on them and acknowledging them from the view point of human life. There exist, of course, evil and woe. The Old Testament explains them easily by the state of almost continual rage of its Jah. "Domine ne in furore tuo arguas me, neque in ira tua corripias me," and afterwards "saggittae tuae infixae sunt mihi et confirmasti super me manuo tuum." And once having accepted this blind fury and this "strengthening of the right hand," it is easy to explain to one's self in a simple manner misfortune. But already in the Old Testament, Ecclesiastes doubts whether everything in the world is in order. The New Testament sees evil in matter in contraposition to the soul; and that is clear. However, viewing the matter, in the abstract, as everything is a close chain of cause and effect, therefore everything is logical, and being logical it cannot per se be either evil or good, but may appear propitious or unfavorable in its relation to man. Besides, that which we call evil or misfortune may, according to the absolute laws of existence, and in its profundity, be wise and essential principles of development, which are beyond human comprehension, and therefore something which in itself is an advantageous phenomenon.

Yes, but in such case, whence does man derive the power to oppose his individual thoughts and his concrete conceptions to this universal logic? If everything is a delusion, why is the human mind a force, existing, as it were, outside of the general laws of existence? There is this something, unprecedented and at the same time tragical, that man must be subjected to these laws and can protest against them. On earth spiritual peace was enjoyed only by the gods, and is now only by animals. Man is eternally struggling and crying veto, and such a veto is every human tear.

And here Gronski's thoughts assumed a more personal aspect. He began to look at the praying Marynia and at first experienced relief. There came to his mind the purely æsthetic observation that Carpaccio might have placed such a maiden beside his guitar-player and Boticelli should have foreseen her. But immediately afterwards he thought that even such a flower must wither, and nothing withers or dies without pain. Suddenly he was seized with a fear of the future, which in her traveling-pouch carries concealed evil and woe. He recalled, indeed, the aphorism which he had uttered, a short time before, about pessimism; but that gave him no comfort, because he understood that the pessimism which flowed from the exertions of the intellect is different from the worldling's pessimism which Dolhanski, by shrugging his shoulders at everything, permitted himself to indulge in when free from card-playing. He moreover propounded to himself the question whether that debilitating pessimism could in any manner be well founded, and here unexpectedly there stood before his eyes another friend, entirely different from Dolhanski, though also a sceptic and hedonist, — Doctor Parebski. He was a college-mate of Gronski and in later years had treated him for a nervous ailment; therefore he knew him perfectly. Once,

after listening to his various reflections and complaints about the impossibility of finding a solution of the paramount questions of life, Doctor Parebski said to him: "That is a pastime for which time and means are necessary. If you had to work for your bread as I have, you would not upset your own mind and the minds of others. All that reminds me of a dog chasing his own tail. And I tell you, look at that which environs you and not at your own navel; and if you want to be well, then — carpe diem!" Gronski at that time deemed these words somewhat brutal and more in the nature of medical than philosophical advice, but now when he recalled them he said to himself: "In truth the road on which, as if from bad habit, I am continually entering leads to nowhere; and who knows whether these women praying this moment with such faith are not, without question, more sensible than I am, not to say more at ease and happier?"

In the meantime Pani Kryzcki began to speak: "Under Thy protection we flee, Holy Mother of God," and the women's voices immediately responded: "Our entreaties deign not to spurn and from all evil deign to preserve us forever." Gronski was swept by an intense longing for such a sweet, tutelary divinity who does not deign to scorn entreaties and who delivers us from evil. How well it would be with him if he could enjoy such peace of mind, and how simple the thought! Unfortunately he already had strayed too far away. He could, like women, yearn, but, unlike them, he could not believe.

Gronski mentally reviewed the whole array of his acquaintances and noted that those who fervently believed, in the depths of their souls, were very few in number. Some there were who did not believe at all; others who wanted to believe and could not; some acknowledged from social considerations the necessity of faith, and finally there were those who were simply occupied with

something else. To this latter category belonged men who, for instance, observed the custom of attending mass as they did the habit of eating breakfast every morning, or of donning a dress-coat each evening or wearing gloves. Through habit it entered into the texture of their lives. Here Gronski unwillingly glanced at Ladislaus, for it seemed to him that the young man was a bird from that grove.

Such, in fact, was the case. Krzycki, however, was neither a dull nor thoughtless person. At the university he, like others, philosophized a little, but afterwards the current of his life carried him in another direction. There existed, indeed, beside Jastrzeb and the daily affairs connected therewith, other matters which deeply interested him. He was sincerely concerned about his native land, her future, the events which might affect her destiny, and finally — women and love. But upon faith he reflected as much as he did upon death, upon which he did not reflect at all, as if he was of the opinion that it was improper to think of them, since they in the proper time will not forget anybody.

At present, moreover, owing to the guests, he was more than a hundred miles from thinking of such questions. At one time, while yet a student, when during vacation time he drove over with his mother to Rzeslewo to attend high mass, he cherished in the depths of his soul the poetical hope that some Sunday the rattle of a carriage would resound without the church doors and a young and charming princess, journeying from somewhere beyond the Baltic to Kiev, would enter the church; that he would invite her to Jastrzeb and later fall in love with her and marry her. And now here unexpectedly those youthful dreams were in some measure realized, for to Jastrzeb there came not one but three princesses of whom he could dream as much as he pleased, for behold, they were now

kneeling before the family altar, absorbed in prayer. He began to gaze — now at Pani Otocka and then at the form of Marynia, which resembled a Tanagra figurine, and repeated to himself: "Mother desires to give one of them to me as a wife." And he had nothing against the idea, but thought of Pani Otocka, "That is a book which somebody has already read, while the other is a fledgeling who can play a violin." Ladislaus was of the age which does not take into calculation any woman under twenty years. After a while, as if unwillingly, he directed his eyes towards Miss Anney, — unwillingly because she formed the most luminous object in the room, for the setting sun, falling upon her light hair, saturated it with such lustre that the whole head appeared aflame. Miss Anney from time to time raised her hand and shaded her head with it as if she desired to extinguish the lustre, but as the rays each moment became less warm, she finally discontinued the action. At times she was hidden from view by the figure of some dark-haired girl, whom Ladislaus did not know, but who, he surmised, must be a servant of one of these ladies. Towards the close of the services the girl bowed so low that she no longer obscured the view of the light hair or the young and powerful shoulders.

"That," he said to himself, "would be the greatest temptation, but mother would be opposed, as she is a foreigner."

But suddenly, as if to rebuke his conscience, there came to his memory the pensive eyes and slender shoulders of Panna Stabrowska. Ah! if only Rzeslewo and the funds had fallen to his lot! But uncle bequeathed Rzeslewo for educational purposes and the funds for trips to Carlsbad by the Mats, as Dolhanski had said, and a few thousand for Hanka Skibianka. At this recollection his brow clouded and he drew his hand across his forehead.

"I unnecessarily became excited before mother and the ladies," he said to himself, "but I must explain this matter to Gronski."

Accordingly, at the close of the mass, he turned to him:

"I want to speak with you about various matters, but only in four eyes. Is that satisfactory?"

"All right," answered Gronski, "when?"

"Not to-day, for I must first go to Rzeslewo to question the men, look over the estate, and then attend to the guests. It will be best to-morrow evening or the day after. We will take our rifles with us and go to the woods. Now there is a flight of woodcocks. Dolhanski does not hunt, so we will leave him with the ladies."

"All right," repeated Gronski.

VIII

THE very next day, towards evening, they strolled with their rifles and a dog in the direction of the mill, and on the way Ladislaus began to narrate all that he had learned the previous day.

"I was in Rzeslewo," he said, "but there you hear nothing good. The peasants insist that the will was forged and that the gentry twisted it about so that they could control, for their own benefit, the money and the lands. I am almost certain that Laskowicz is pouring oil upon that fire. But why? I cannot understand; nevertheless, that is the case. The landless, in particular, are wrought up and say that if the fortune is divided among them, they, themselves, will contribute for a school. In reality, they have no conception of the kind of school Zarnowski wanted, nor of the cost of establishing it."

"In view of this, what do you intend to do?" asked Gronski.

"I do not know. I will see. In the meantime I will try to convince them. I also begged the rector to explain the matter to them and spoke with a few of the older husbandmen. I seemed to have persuaded them; but unfortunately with them it is thus: that everyone, taken singly, is intelligent and even sensible, but when you talk to them together, it is like trying to smash a stone wall with your head."

"That is nothing strange," answered Gronski; "take ten thousand doctors of philosophy together and they become a mob which is ruled by gesticulations."

"That may be," said Ladislaus, "but I did not wish to

speak of the will only. I also saw the old Rzeslewo overseer and learned a great many, intensely curious things. Figure to yourself that our guesses were wrong and that Hanka Skibianka is not the daughter of Uncle Zarnowski."

"And that seemed so certain! But what kind of proof have you of this?"

"Very simple. Skiba was a native of Galicia and emigrated to Rzeslewo with his wife and daughter when the latter was five years old. As Zarnowski, while well, stayed in the village like a wall, and at that time for at least ten years had not travelled anywhere, it is evident that he could not have been the father of that girl."

"That decides the matter. I cannot understand why he bequeathed to her ten thousand roubles."

"There is an interesting history connected with that," replied Ladislaus. "You must know that the deceased, though now it appears that he loved the peasants, always kept them under very strict control. He managed them according to the old system; that is, he abused them from morning till night. They say that when he cursed in the corridor you could hear him over half the village. A certain day he went into the blacksmith's shop and, finding something out of order, began to berate the blacksmith unmercifully. The smith bowed and listened in humility. It happened that little Hanka at that time was in front of the smithy and, seeing what was taking place, seized a little stick and started to belabor Zarnowski with it all over the legs. 'You will scold Tata, will you?' It is said that the deceased at first was dumbfounded, but afterwards burst into such laughter that his anger against the blacksmith passed away."

"That Hanka pleases me."

"So did she please Uncle. The very same day he sent a rouble to the smith's wife and ordered her to bring the child to the manor-house. From that time he became

attached to her. He commanded the old housekeeper to teach her to read, and attended to it himself. The child likewise became devoted to him, and this continued for a number of years. In the end people began to say that the master wanted to keep the smith's daughter entirely at his residence and have her educated as a lady, but this, it seems, was untrue. He wanted to bring her up as a stout village lass and give her a dowry. The Skibas, whose only child she was, declared that they would not surrender her for anything in the world. Of course, I know only what the overseer told me, for our relations with the deceased were broken on account of the mill from which he drained the water for his ponds."

"And later the Skibas emigrated."

"Yes, but before that time Zarnowski began to fail in health and moved to Warsaw, and subsequently resided abroad; so that their relations relaxed. When the Skibas emigrated, the girl was seventeen. Uncle, on his return to Rzeslewo to die, longed for her and waited for some news of her. But as he had previously removed even his furniture from Rzeslewo to the city, she evidently assumed that he never would return and did not know where to write."

"The bequest proves best that he did not forget her," said Gronski, "and from the whole will it appears that he was a man of better heart than people thought."

"Surely," answered Ladislaus.

For an interval they walked in silence; then Krzycki resumed the conversation.

"As for myself, I prefer that she is not the daughter of the deceased."

"Why? Has that any bearing on the bequest?"

"No. Under no circumstances will I accept that bequest. Never!"

"That is all very well, but tell me, why did you renounce it with such vehemence that everybody was astonished?"

"There is one circumstance which neither Mother nor anybody else even suspects, but which I will sincerely confess to you. In the proper time I seduced that girl."

Gronski stood still, gazed at Ladislaus, and ejaculated:

"What 's that?"

As he was not prone to treat such matters with levity and, besides, the previous narrative of Krzycki had awakened within him a sympathy for Hanka, he frowned and asked:

"For the fear of God! You seduced a child? And you say it was done in the proper time?"

But Ladislaus replied quite calmly:

"Let us not stop, for the dog has gone too far ahead of us," and here he pointed at the white spaniel running before them. "I did not seduce a child, for at that time she was sixteen. It happened more than seven years ago, while I was still a student and came to Jastrzeb on a vacation."

"Were there any consequences?"

"As far as I know there were none. You will understand that having returned the following vacation and not finding either her or the Skibas, I did not ask about them, for on the thief's head the cap burns.[1] But to-day I casually asked the overseer whether the Skibas had not probably emigrated because some mishap had befallen their daughter. He answered, 'No.'"

"Then it is better for her and for you."

"Certainly it is much better; for otherwise the matter would have been brought to light and would reach Mother's ears."

"And in such case you would suffer much unpleasantness."

[1] "On the thief's head the cap burns:" a Polish proverb meaning that persons, conscious of guilt, always fear detection. — Translator.

There was irony in Gronski's voice, but Ladislaus, absorbed in his own thoughts, did not notice it and said:

"In such case, I would have unpleasantness because Mother in such matters is exceedingly severe. So, to-day, after mature deliberation, I am like a wolf, who will commit no injury in the neighborhood where he keeps his nest, but at that time I was more headstrong and less careful."

"May the deuce take you!" exclaimed Gronski.

"For what?"

"Nothing; speak on."

"I have not much more to say. Recurring to the will, you now understand why I could not accept it."

"Perhaps I do, but tell me 'thy exquisite reason,' as Shakespeare says."

"Well, as to the seduction of a girl, that does happen in villages, but to seduce a girl and appropriate to one's own use that which had been provided for her, — why, that would be too much. And perhaps she may be suffering, in want, somewhere in America."

"Everything is possible," answered Gronski.

"So that if the advertisements, which I will make, do not reach her notice, in such case, I would be using her money, while she would die of starvation. No. Everything has its limits. I am not extraordinarily scrupulous, but there are some things which I plainly cannot do."

"Tell me, but sincerely, do you entertain towards her any sentiment?"

"I will tell you candidly that I completely forgot her. Now I have recalled her and, in truth, I cannot have any ill-will towards her. On the contrary, that kind of recollection cannot, of course, be disagreeable, unless it is linked with remorse. But we were mere children — and a pure accident brought us together."

"Then permit me to ask one more question. If the

deceased bequeathed to her the whole of Rzeslewo, and the funds, and if she did not within two years appear to claim them, would you renounce such a bequest?"

"I cannot answer a question to which I have not given any consideration. I would not want to represent myself to you any better or any worse than I am. But this much is certain: I would publish the advertisements, and would publish them for the two years. But after all, of what importance to you can my answer be?"

And here he abruptly paused, for from the direction of the adjacent birch grove some strange sound reached them, resembling a snort, and at the same time, above the tops of the birch and the lime-trees, there appeared upon the background of the twilight a gray bird, flying in a straight line to the underwood on the opposite side of the meadow.

"Woodcock!" cried Krzycki, and he bounded forward.

Gronski, following him, thought:

"He certainly never read Nietzsche, and yet in his veins, together with the blood, there courses some noble superhumanity. If anybody betrayed his sister, he would have shot him in the head like a dog, but as a village girl is concerned, he does not feel the slightest uneasiness."

Later they stopped at the edge of the birch grove. For a time intense silence prevailed; after which a strange voice resounded again above their heads and another woodcock appeared. Gronski fired and missed; Krzycki bettered — and they saw how, with descending flight, the fowl fell in the underwood farther off. The white dog for a while lingered in the dusk of the thicket and returned carrying the dead bird in his mouth.

"She was already wounded when I fired," said Ladislaus. "It is your bird."

"You are a gracious host," answered Gronski.

And again silence ensued, which even the rustle of leaves did not disturb, as there was not a breath of air. But

after a time two woodcocks snorted above their heads, one following the other, at which Gronski could not shoot, but Ladislaus winged both cleanly. Finally a more reckless one took pity on Gronski for she flew accommodatingly over him, as if she desired to save him any inconvenience. He himself felt ashamed at the thrill of pleasure he experienced when, after firing, he saw the bird hit the ground; and agreeable to his incorrigible habit of meditation upon every phenomenon, he came to the conclusion that his strange sensation could be attributed to the aboriginal times, when man and his family were dependent for subsistence upon skill in hunting. Thanks to this reasoning, he did not shoot at another bird that flew nearer the edge of the underwood and with which the flight evidently ended, as they waited for others in vain. In the meanwhile it grew dark, and after an interval the white spaniel emerged from the nightfall, and after him came Ladislaus.

"We had a bootless chase," he said, "but that is nothing. In any case, there are four morsels for the ladies. Tomorrow we will try for more."

"This was but a slight interruption in your confessions," answered Gronski, slinging his rifle over his shoulder.

"My confessions?" said Ladislaus. "Aha! — yes."

"You said that a mere accident brought you together."

"That actually was the case. But we must now go ahead and you will kindly follow in my footsteps, as it is damp here in some places. This way we will reach the bridge and at the bridge we will have the road."

Not until they were on the road did he commence his narrative:

"It all began and ended in the mill, which even at that time served as a storage place for hay; and it did not continue more than a fortnight. It occurred thus: I once went out with a rifle to hunt for roebucks, for here roebucks come out in the evening at the clearing on the stream.

It was very cloudy that day, but as it appeared to be clear in the west, I thought that the clouds would pass away. I took a position of a few hundred — and even more — steps from the mill, for nearer there was lying on the meadow, linen, which might scare the bucks; and about a half hour later I actually killed a buck. But in the meanwhile it began to rain, and in a short while there was such a downpour as I had never seen in Jastrzeb. I seized my buck by the hind legs and began to scamper off with all my might for the mill. On the way I noticed that some one had carried away the linen. I rushed into the mill and buried myself up to the ears in the hay, when I heard somebody breathing close by me. I asked: 'Who is that?' A thin voice answered me, 'I.' 'What kind of an I?' 'Hanka.' 'What are you doing here?' 'I came for the linen.' Then it began to thunder so much that I thought the mill would fall to pieces; — and not until it had subsided somewhat did I learn by the aid of continuous questions that my female companion was from Rzeslewo; that her family name was Skibianka, and that she finished her sixteenth year on St. Anne's Day. Then, and I give you my word, without any sinister will or intent, but only as a jest and because it is customary to talk that way with village maids, I said to her: 'Will you give me a kiss?' She did not answer, but as at that moment a thunder clap pealed, she nestled closer to me — perhaps from fright. And I kissed her on the very lips and, as I live, I had the same impression as if I had kissed a fragrant flower. So I repeated it twice, three times, and so on, and she returned the tenth or twentieth. When the storm passed away and it became necessary for us to part, I had her arms about my neck and at the same time my cheeks were wet with her tears, — for she cried, but I do not know whether from the loss of innocence or because I was leaving."

Here, in spite of himself, the song of Ophelia, when insane, flitted through Krzycki's memory.

Ladislaus continued:

"On our departure she said that she knew I was the young lord of Jastrzeb; that she saw me every Sunday in Rzeslewo and gazed upon me as upon some miracle-working painting."

"Ah, you certainly are handsome to the point of nauseousness," interrupted Gronski, with a certain irritation.

"Bah! — I have already three or four gray hairs."

"Surely, from birth. How often did you meet thereafter?"

"Before I left her, I asked her whether she could not slip away the following evening. She answered that she could, because in the evening she always gathered the linen, which was being bleached upon the meadow, for fear that some one might steal it, and that besides, in summer time she did not sleep in the cabin with her parents, but on the hay in the barn. After that we met every day. I had to conceal myself from the night watch, so I slunk out of the window into the garden, though this was an unnecessary precaution, for the watch slept so soundly that one time I carried off the trumpet and staff belonging to one of them. It was amusing also that, seeing Hanka only in the night time, I did not know how she really looked; though in the moonlight she appeared to me to be pretty."

"And in church?"

"Our collator's pew is near the altar, while the girls knelt in the rear. There are so many of the same red and yellow shawls, studded with so many flowers, that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. At times it seemed to me that I saw her in the distance, but I could not see her perfectly. The vacation soon ended, and when I returned the following season the Skibas were gone."

"Did you bid her farewell?"

"I admit that I did not. I preferred to avoid that."

"And did you ever long for her?"

"Yes. In Warsaw I longed for her intensely, and during the first month I was deeply in love with her. After my return to Jastrzeb, when I again saw the mill the feeling revived, but at the same time I was content that everything should drop, as it were, into the water and that Mother should not know anything about it."

Conversing in this manner, they turned from the side road to the shady walk leading to the manor-house, whose low lights, from a distance of about a verst, at times glistened through the boughs of the linden, and then again hid themselves, screened by the thick foliage. The night was starry and fair. It was, however, quite dark, for the moon had not yet risen and the copper glow upon the eastern sky announced its near approach. There was not the slightest breath of air. The great nocturnal stillness was broken by the barks of dogs, barely audible, from the distant slumbering village. Involuntarily, Gronski and Ladislaus began to speak in lower tones. However, everything was not asleep, for a few hundred paces from the walk, on the meadow near the river, firelights were intermittingly flashing.

"Those are peasants pasturing the horses and catching crawfish by the lights of the resinous wood," said Krzycki. "I even hear one of them riding away."

And in fact at that moment they heard on the meadows the clatter of the horse's hoofs, deadened by the grass, and immediately afterwards the loud voice of a herdsman resounded, who, amidst the nocturnal quiet, shouted in a drawling tone:

"Wojtek — Bring with you some more fagots, for these are not sufficient."

The night rider, having reached the road, soon passed

by the chatting friends like a shadow. He, however, recognized the young heir, as in riding by them he pulled off his cap and saluted:

"Praised be the Lord!"

"Now and forever."

And for some time they walked in silence.

Ladislaus began to whistle quietly and to shout at the dog, but Gronski, who was cogitating upon what had occurred in the mill, said:

"Do you know that if you were an Englishman, for instance, your idyl would have ended, in all probability, differently, and you would throughout your life have had a chaste remembrance, in which there would be great poetry."

"We eat less fish, therefore have a temperament differing from the Englishmen. As to poetry, perhaps there also was a little of it in our affair."

"It is not so much different temperament as different usages, and in that is the relief. They have a soul, healthier and at the same time, more independent, and do not borrow their morality from French books."

After which he meditated for a while and then continued:

"You say that in your relations there was a little poetry. Certainly, but looking at it only from Hanka's side, not yours. In her, really, there is something poetical, for, deducing from your own words, she loved you truly."

"That is certain," said Ladislaus. "Who knows whether I ever in my life will be loved as much?"

"I think that you will not. For that reason, I am astonished that this stone should drop into the depth of your forgetfulness and that you should have so completely effaced it."

These words touched Krzycki somewhat, so he replied:

"Candidly speaking, I related all this to you for the

purpose of explaining why I do not accept the bequest, and, in the naïveté of my soul, I thought that you would praise me. But you are only seeking sore spots. Indeed, I would, after all, have preferred that this had not happened, but, since it happened, it is best not to think of it. For if I had as many millions as there are girls seduced every year in the villages, I could purchase not only Rzeslewo, but one half of the county. I can assure you that they themselves do not look upon it as a tragedy, neither do such things end in misfortune. It would plainly be laughable if I took this to heart more than Hanka who in all probability did not take it to heart and does not."

"How do you know?"

"That is usually the case. But if it were the reverse, what can I do? Surely I will not journey across the ocean to seek her. In a book that might perhaps appear very romantic, but in reality I have an estate which I cannot abandon and a family which it is not permissible for me to sacrifice. Such a Hanka, with whom, speaking parenthetically, you have soured me by recalling, may be the most honest girl, but to marry her — of course I could not marry her; therefore what, after all, can I do?"

"I do not know; but you must agree that there is a certain moral unsavoriness in the situation in which a man, after committing a wrong, afterwards asks himself or others, 'What can I do?'"

"Oh, that was only a façon de parler," replied Krzycki, "for, on the whole, I know perfectly. I will publish the advertisements and with that everything will end. The penance, which the priest at the proper time imposed upon me, I have performed, and I do not intend to make any further atonement."

To this Gronski said:

"Sero molunt deorum molæ. Do you understand what that means in Polish?"

"Having assumed the management of Jastrzeb, I sowed all my latinity over its soil, but it has not taken root."

"That means: The mills of the gods grind late."

Krzycki began to laugh and, pointing his hand in the direction of the old mill, said:

"That one will not grind anything any more; I guarantee that."

Further conversation was interrupted by their meeting near the gates two indistinct forms, with which they almost collided, for though the moon had already ascended, in the old linden walk it was completely dark.

Ladislaus thought that they were the lady visitors enjoying an evening stroll, but for certainty asked, "Who is there?"

"We," answered an unknown feminine voice.

"And who in particular?"

"Servants of Pani Otocka and Miss Anney."

The young man recalled the young girl whose dark head obstructed his view of the lustrous hair of the English woman during the May mass.

"Aha!" he said. "Do not you young girls fear to walk in the darkness? A were-wolf might carry off one of you."

"We are not scared," answered the same voice.

"And perhaps I am a were-wolf?"

"A were-wolf does not look like that."

Both girls began to laugh and withdrew a few steps; at the same time a bright ray darted through the leaves and illumined the white forehead, black eyebrows, and the whites of the eyes of one of them, which glittered greenishly.

Krzycki, who was flattered by the words that a were-wolf did not look like that, gazed at those eyes and said:

"Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

The ladies, with Dolhanski, were already in the dining-room, as the service of the supper awaited only the hunters who, after their return, withdrew to change their apparel. Marynia sat at one end of the table with the children and conversed a little with them and a little with Laskowicz, who was relating something to her with great animation, gazing all the time at her with intense fixedness and also with wariness that no one should observe him. Gronski, however, did observe him and, as the young student had interested and disquieted him from the time he learned of his agitation among the Rzeslewo peasants, he desired to participate in the conversation. But Marynia at that moment having heard the conclusion, joined the other ladies, who, having previously heard from the balcony the shooting in the direction of the old mill, inquired about the results of the hunt. It appearing that neither Miss Anney nor the two sisters had ever seen woodcocks except upon a platter, the old servant upon Krzycki's order brought the four lifeless victims. They viewed them with curiosity, expressed tardy commiseration for their tragic fate, and asked about their manner of life. Ladislaus, whom the animal world had interested from early years, began to relate at the supper the strange habits of those birds and their mysterious flights. While thus occupied he paid particular attention to Pani Otocka, for he was, for the first time, struck by her uncommonly fine stature. On the whole, he preferred other, less subtile kinds of beauty, and prized, above all else, buxom women. He observed, however, that on that night Pani Otocka looked extraordinarily handsome. Her unusually delicate complexion appeared yet more delicate in her black lace-stitched dress, and in her eyes, in the outlines of her lips, in the expression of her countenance, and in her whole form there was something so maidenly that whoever was not aware of her widowhood would have taken her for a

maid of a good country family. Ladislaus, from the first arrival of these ladies, had indeed enlisted on the side of Miss Anney, but at the present moment he had to concede in his soul that the Englishwoman was not a specimen of so refined a race and, what was worse, she seemed to him that day less beautiful than this "subtile cousin."

But at the same time he made a strange discovery, namely: that this observation not only did not lessen his sympathy for the light-haired lady, but in some manner moved him strongly and inclined him to a greater friendship for her; as if by that comparison with Pani Otocka he had done an undeserved wrong to the Englishwoman, for which he ought to apologize to her. "I must be on my guard," he thought, "otherwise I will fall." He began to search for the celestial flow in her eyes and, finding it, drank its dim azure, drop by drop.

In the meantime Pani Krzycki, desirous of learning the earliest plans of the sisters, began to ask Pani Otocka whether they were going to travel abroad, and where.

"The doctor," she said, "sends me to mineral baths on account of my rheumatism, but I would be delighted to spend one more summer with you somewhere."

"And to us your sojourn at Krynica left the most agreeable memories," replied Pani Otocka; "particularly, as we are in perfect health, we willingly would remain in the village and more willingly would invite Aunt to us, with her entire household, were it not that the times are so troublous and it is unknown what may happen on the morrow. But if it will quiet down, Aunt, after her recovery, must certainly pay us a visit."

Saying this, she ardently kissed the hand of Pani Krzycki who said:

"How good you are and how lovable! I would with all my heart go to you, only, with my health, I must not obey the heart but various hidden ailments. Besides, the

times are really troublous and I understand it is rather dangerous for ladies to remain alone in the villages. Have you any reliable people in Zalesin?"

"I do not fear my own people as they were very much attached to my husband, and now that attachment has passed to me. My husband taught them, above all things, patriotism, and at the same time introduced improvements which did not exist elsewhere. We have an orphanage, hospital, baths, stores, and fruit nurseries for the distribution of small trees. He even caused artesian wells to be sunk to provide enough healthful water for the village."

Dolhanski, hearing this, leaned towards Krzycki and whispered:

"A capitalist's fantasy. He regarded his wife and Zalesin as two playthings which he fondled, and played the rôle of a philanthropist because he could afford it."

But Pani Krzycki again began to ask:

"Who now is in charge of Zalesin?"

And the young widow, having cast off a momentary sad recollection, answered with a smile:

"In the neighborhood they say Dworski rules Zalesin. — He is the old accountant of my husband and is very devoted to us. — I rule Dworski, and Marynia rules me."

"And that is the truth," interjected Miss Anney, "with this addition, and me also."

To this Marynia shook her head and said:

"Oh, Aunt, if you only knew how they sometimes twit me!"

"Somehow I do not see that, but I think that the time will come when somebody will rule you also."

"It has already come," broke out Marynia.

"So? That is curious. Who is that despot?"

And the little violinist, pointing with a quick movement of her little finger at Gronski, said:

"That gentleman."

"Now I understand," said Dolhanski, "why, after our return from the notary, he had a teapot full of hot water over his head."

Gronski shrugged his shoulders, like a man who had been charged with unheard-of things, and exclaimed:

"I? A despot? Why, I am a victim, the most hypnotized of all."

"Then Pan Laskowicz is the hypnotizer, not I," answered the young miss, "for he himself at supper was telling me about hypnotism and explaining what it is."

Gronski looked toward the other end of the table, in the direction of the student, and saw his eyes, strained, refractory, and glistening, fastened upon Marynia.

"Aha!" he thought, "he actually is trying his powers upon her."

He frowned and, addressing her, said:

"Nobody in truth knows what hypnotism is. We see its manifestations and nothing more. But how did Laskowicz explain it to you?"

"He told me what I already had heard before; that the person put to sleep must perform everything which the operator commands, and even when awakened must submit to the operator's will."

"That is untrue," said Gronski.

"And I think likewise. He claimed also that he could put me to sleep very easily, but I feel that he cannot."

"Excellent! Do such things interest you?"

"Hypnotism a little. But if it is to be anything mysterious, then I prefer to hear about spirits; especially do I like to hear the stories which one of our neighbors relates about fairies. He says they are called sprites, and indulge in all kinds of tricks in old houses, and they can be seen at night time through the windows in rooms where the fire is burning in the hearth. There they join hands and dance before the fire."

"Those are gay fairies."

"And not malicious, though mischievous. Our aged neighbor piously believes in them and quarrels about them with the rector. He says his house is full of them and that they are continually playing pranks: sometimes pulling the coils of the clock to make it ring; sometimes hiding his slippers and other things; making noise during the night; hitching crickets to nut-shells and driving with them over the rooms; in the kitchen they skim the milk and throw peas into the fire to make them pop. If you do not vex them, they are benevolent, driving away spiders and mice, and watching that the mushrooms do not soil the floor. This neighbor of ours at one time was a man of great education, but in his old age has become queer, and he tells us this in all seriousness. We, naturally, laugh at it, but I confess that I very much wish that such a world did exist; — strange and mysterious! There would be in it something so good and nice, and less sadness."

Here she began to look off with dreamy eyes and afterwards continued:

"I remember also that whenever we discussed Boecklin's pictures, those fauns, nymphs, and dryads which he painted, I always regretted that all that did not exist in reality. And sometimes it seemed to me that they might exist, only we do not see them. For, in truth, who knows what happens in the woods at noontime or night time, when no one is there; or in the mists during the moonlight or upon the ponds? Belief in such a world is not wholly childish, since we believe in angels."

"I also believe in fairies, nymphs, dryads, and angels," answered Gronski.

"Really?" she asked, "for you always speak to me as to a child."

And he answered her only mentally:

"I speak as with a child, but I idolize."

But further conversation was interrupted by the servant, who informed Ladislaus that the steward of Rzeslewo had arrived and desired to see the "bright young lord" on a very important matter. Krzycki apologized to the company and with the expression, customary with country husbandmen, "What is up now?" left the room. As the supper was almost finished, they all began to move, after the example of the lady of the house, who, however, for a while endeavored in vain to rise, for the rheumatism during the past two days afflicted her more and more. Similar attacks occurred often and in such cases her son usually conducted her from room to room. But in this instance Miss Anney, who sat nearest to her, came to her assistance and, taking her in her arms, lifted her easily, skillfully, and without any exertion.

"I thank you, I thank you," said Pani Krzycki, "for otherwise I would have to wait for Laudie. Ah, my God, how good it is to be strong!"

"Oh, in me you have a veritable Samson," answered Miss Anney in her pleasant, subdued voice.

But at that moment Ladislaus, who evidently recalled that he had to escort his mother, rushed into the room and, seeing what was taking place, exclaimed:

"Permit me, Miss Anney. That is my duty. You will fatigue yourself."

"Not the least."

"Ah, Laudie," said Pani Krzycki, "to tell the truth, I do not know which one of you two is the stronger."

"Is it truly so?" he asked, looking with rapt eyes upon the slender form of the girl.

And she began to wink with her eyes in token that such was the fact, but at the same time blushed as if ashamed of her unwomanly strength.

Ladislaus, however, assisted her to seat his mother at the table in the small salon, at which she was accustomed

to amuse herself in the evenings by laying out cards to forecast fortunes. On this occasion he unintentionally brushed his shoulder against Miss Anney's shoulder and, when he felt those steel-like young muscles, a violent thrill suddenly penetrated through him and at the same time he was possessed by a perception of some elementary, unheard-of, blissful power. If he were Gronski and ever in his life had read Lucretius' hymn to Venus, he would have been able to know and name that power. But as he was only a twenty-seven-year-old, healthy nobleman, he only thought that the moments in which he would be free to hug such a girl to his bosom would be worth the sacrifice of Jastrzeb, Rzeslewo, and even life.

But in the meanwhile he had to return to the steward of Rzeslewo, who waited for him in the office upon an urgent matter. Their talk lasted so long that when Ladislaus reappeared in the small salon, the young ladies had already withdrawn to their rooms. Only his mother, who was purposely waiting, desirous of knowing what was the matter, remained, with Gronski and with Dolhanski, who was playing baccarat with himself.

"What is the news?" asked Pani Krzycki.

"Absolutely nothing good. Only let Mamma not get alarmed, for we are of course here in Jastrzeb and not in Rzeslewo; and eventually we can brush this aside with our hands. But nevertheless, strange things are occurring there and Kapuscinski, in any event, did right to come here."

"For the Lord's sake, who is Kapuscinski?" exclaimed Dolhanski, dropping the monocle from his eye.

"The steward of Rzeslewo. He says that some unknown persons, probably from Warsaw, appeared there and are acting like gray geese in the skies. They issue commands, summon the peasants, incite them, promising them the lands and even order them to take possession of the stock.

They predict it will be the same in all Poland as it is in Rzeslewo —"

"And what of the peasants? what of the peasants?" interrupted Pani Krzycki.

"Some believe them, while others do not. The more sensible, who attempt to resist, are threatened with death. The manor farm-hands will not obey Kapuscinski and say that they will only pasture and feed the cattle, but will not touch any other work. About fifteen of the tenants are preparing to go to the woods with hatchets and they declare that, if the foresters interfere with their right to cut wood, they will give them a good drubbing. Kapuscinski has lost his head completely and came to me, as one of the executors of the will, for advice."

"And what did you tell him?"

"As he declared to me that he was not certain of his life in Rzeslewo, I advised him by all means to pass the night with us in Jastrzeb. I wanted first to consult Mother and you, for in fact, advice under the circumstances is difficult to give and the situation is grave. Of course such a situation cannot continue very long, and sooner or later the peasants themselves will suffer the most by it. This we must positively prevent. I will candidly state that for the past two days, I have been considering whether it would not be better if I renounced the curatorship of the new school and Rzeslewo matters in general. I hesitated only because it is a public service, but in truth, I have so much work to attend to here in Jastrzeb, that I do not know on what I shall lay my hands first. But now, since it is necessary to rescue the peasants, and since a certain amount of danger is connected with it, I cannot retreat."

"I will fear about you, but I understand you," said Pani Krzycki.

"I think that by all means, I should drive over to-morrow

morning to Rzeslewo, but if I do not secure a hearing there, then what is to be done?"

"You will not get any," said Dolhanski, not pausing in his distribution of the cards.

"If you go, I will go with you," announced Pani Krzycki.

"Ah, that would be the only thing needful! Let Mamma only think that in such a case I would be terribly hampered and certainly would not gain anything."

After which he kissed her hand and said:

"No, no! Mamma does not understand that matters would be worse and, if Mamma insists, then I would rather not go at all."

Gronski propped his head upon his hand and thought that it was easier to analyze at a desk the various phases of life than to offer sound advice in the presence of urgent events. Dolhanski at last stopped playing baccarat with himself and said:

"The position we are placed in passes all comprehension. But were we in any other country, the police would be summoned and the matter would end in a day."

To this Ladislaus replied with some anger:

"As for that, permit me! I will not summon the police; not only not against those peasants, but not even against those forbidden figures who now haunt Rzeslewo. No, never!"

"Very well; long live an epoch of true freedom!"

"Who knows," said Gronski, "but that the summoning of the police would just suit these gentlemen?"

"In what way?"

"Because they themselves, at the proper season, would disappear, but later would incite the people again and would cry all over Poland, 'Behold! who appeals to the police against peasants.'"

"That is a pertinent observation," said Ladislaus;

"now I understand various things which I did not comprehend before."

"From the opening of the will," said Dolhanski, "Rzeslewo and its inhabitants did not concern me in the least. However, one thought occurred to me while dealing the cards. Laudie will drive over to Rzeslewo to-morrow on a fruitless errand. He may receive only a sound beating, without benefiting anybody —"

"It has never yet come to that, and that is something I do not fear. Our family has lived in Jastrzeb from time immemorial, and the peasants of this neighborhood would not raise their hands against a Krzycki —"

"Above all, do not interrupt me," said Dolhanski. "If you do not get a sound thrashing — and I assume that you may not — then you will not secure a hearing, as you yourself foresaw a little while ago. If we two, that is, Gronski and myself, went over there, we would not effect anything because they have seen us at the funeral, and the estimable Slavonians of Rzeslewo look upon us as men who have a personal interest in the matter. It will be necessary that some one unknown go there, who will not argue, but who will act as if he had the right and power and will command the peasants to behave peaceably. Since you are so much concerned about them, that will be the only way. So, then, since by virtue of the unfathomable decrees of Providence there exist in this beloved land of ours National Democrats, whom, parenthetically speaking, I cannot endure any more than the seven-spot of clubs, but who, in all probability, have fists as sweaty and as heavy as the socialists, — could you not settle this matter with their assistance?"

"Of course, naturally, naturally!" exclaimed Gronski; "the peasants, after all, have great confidence in the National party."

"I also belong to that party with my whole heart," said

Krzycki, "but, sitting, like a stone, in Jastrzeb, I do not know to whom to apply."

"In any case, not to me," said Dolhanski.

But Gronski, though he did not belong to any faction, thoroughly knew the city and easily suggested the addresses and the manner in which the party could be notified. He afterwards said:

"And now I will give you one word of advice, the same which you, Laudie, gave Kapuscinski, namely, that we go to sleep, for you, especially, madam,"— here he addressed the lady of the house — "were entitled to that long ago. Is it agreed?"

"Agreed," answered Ladislaus; "but wait a few minutes. After conducting Mother, I will accompany you upstairs."

Within a quarter of an hour he returned, but instead of bidding his guests the promised "good-night" he drew closer to them and resumed the interrupted conversation.

"I did not wish to relate everything before Mother," he said, "in order not to alarm her. But in fact the matter is much worse. So, speaking first of what concerns us, imagine for yourself that those strangers immediately after their arrival asked first of all about Laskowicz, and that Laskowicz was in Rzeslewo this afternoon and returned here an hour before we came back from the hunt. Now it is positively certain that we have in our midst an agitator."

"Then throw him out," interrupted Dolhanski. "If I were in your place, I would have done that long ago, if only for the reason that he has eyes set closely to each other, like a baboon. In a man that indicates fanaticism and stupidity."

"Unquestionably I will be done with him to-morrow, and I would end with him even to-day, notwithstanding the late hour, were it not that I desire first to calm down

and not create any foolish disturbance. I do not like this, and I would not advise those apostles to peer into Jastrzeb. As I live, I would not advise it."

"Have they any intention of paying you a visit?"

"Certainly. If not to me personally, then to my farm-hands. They announced in Rzeslewo that they would cause an agrarian strike in the entire vicinity."

"Then my advice, to drive out one wedge with another, is the most feasible."

"Assuredly. I will adopt that course without delay."

"I know," said Gronski, "that they want to inaugurate agrarian strikes throughout the whole country. They will not succeed as the peasant element will repel their efforts. They, like most people from the cities, do not take into account the relation of man to the soil. Nevertheless, there will be considerable losses and the confusion will increase, and this is what they chiefly care for. Ah! Shakespeare's 'sun of foolery' not only shines in our land, but is in the zenith."

"If we are talking of that kind of a sun, we can, like a former king of Spain, say that it never sets in our possessions."

But Gronski spoke farther:

"Socialism — good! That, of course, is a thing more ancient than Menenius Agrippa. That river has flown for ages. At times, when covered by other ideas, it coursed underground, and later emerged into the broad daylight. At times it subsides, then swells and overflows. At present we have a flood, very menacing, which may submerge not only factories, cities, and countries, but even civilization. Above all, it threatens France, where comfort and money have displaced all other ideas. Socialism is the inevitable result of that. Capital wedded to demagogism cannot breed any other child; and if that child has the head of a monster and mole, so much the worse for the

father. It demonstrates that superfluous wealth may be a national danger. But this is not strange. Privilege is an injustice against which men have fought for centuries. Formerly the princes, clergy, and nobility were vested with it. To-day nobody has any; money possesses all. In truth, Labor has stepped forth to combat with it."

"This begins to smell to me like an apology for socialism," observed Dolhanski.

"No. It is not an apology. For, above all things, viewing this matter from above, what is this new current but one more delusion in the human chase after happiness? For myself, I only contend that socialism has come, or rather, it has gathered strength, because it was bound to grow. I care only about its looks and whether it could not have a different face. And here my criticism begins. I do not deem socialism a sin in the socialists, but only that the idea in their school assumes the lineaments of an malignant idiot. I accuse our socialists of incredible stupidity; like that of the ants who wrangled with and bit the working ants, while the ant-eater was lying on the ant-hill and swallowing them by thousands."

"True," cried Ladislaus.

"And, of course," concluded Gronski, "on our ant-hills there lie a whole herd of ant-eaters."

Here Dolhanski again dropped the monocle from his eye.

"That you may not retire to sleep under a disagreeable impression," he said, "I will tell you an anecdote which will illustrate what Gronski has said. During the last exposition in Paris, one of the black kings of French Congo, having heard of it, announced his wish to see it. The Colonial government, which was anxious to send as many exotic figures as possible to Paris, not only consented, but sent to this monarch a few shirts with the information that in France such articles of attire were indispensable.

Naturally the shirts excited general admiration and surprise. The King summoned ministers, priests, and leaders of parties for a consultation as to how such a machine was to be put on. After long debates, which undoubtedly could not be held without bitter clashes between the native rationalists and the native nationalists and progressionists, all doubts were finally set at rest. The king pulled the sleeves of the shirt over his legs, so that the cuffs were at his ankles. The bottom edge of the shirt, which in this instance became the top, was fastened under his arm-pits by a string in such a manner that the bosom was on his back and the opening was at his neck — somewhat lower. Delighted with this solution of the difficulty, the ruler acknowledged that the attire, if not entirely, was, at least in certain respects, very practical and, above all, extraordinarily striking."

"Good," said Gronski, laughing, "but what connection has that with what I had previously said?"

"Greater than may appear to you," replied Dolhanski; "for the fact is that the various Slavonians are prepared to bear liberty and the socialists socialism in the same manner as that negro king wore his European shirt."

Saying this, he replaced the monocle in his eye and announced that as in virtuous Jastrzeb and in such company there could not be any talk of a "night card party," he would take his leave and go to sleep. The others decided to follow his example. Ladislaus took the lamp and began to light the way for the guests. On the stairs he turned to them with a countenance which depicted ill humor and said:

"May the deuce take it, but all these disturbances must occur at a time when we have in Jastrzeb such lovely ladies."

"Beware," answered Dolkanski, "and know that nothing can be concealed from my eyes. When you assisted

Miss Anney to conduct your mother, you looked like an electrical machine. If anybody drew a wire through you, you could illuminate not only the mansion but the adjoining out-buildings."

Ladislaus raised the lamp higher so that the light would not fall upon his countenance, for he felt at that moment that he blushed like a student.

IX

Ladislaus Krzycki possessed such a happy nature that, having once lain down to sleep, he could a few minutes later fall into a deep slumber which would continue until the morning. That night, however, he could not fall asleep because the impressions of the day, together with the parting words of Dolhanski, had led him into a state of exasperation and anger. He was angry at Rzeslewo; at the disturbances which were taking place there; at Dolhanski because he had observed the impression which the young girl had made upon him — and particularly because he himself had afforded him an opportunity to comment upon it — and finally at the innocent Miss Anney. After a time, rolling from side to side, he opened an imaginary conversation with her, in which he assumed the rôle of a man, who, indeed, does not deny that he is deeply under the spell, nevertheless, can view matters soberly and sanely. Therefore he admitted to Miss Anney that she was handsome and amiable; that she had an immensely sympathetic voice, a strange, fascinating look, and a body like marble — ah, what a body! Nevertheless, he made the explicit reservation that she must not think that he loved her to distraction, or was even smitten with her. He would concede anything to her that she desired, but to admit that he was in love with her was as far removed from his thoughts as love is from matrimony, of which, of course, there could not be any talk. Above all, she was a foreigner, and Mother in that respect had her prejudices, justly so; and he himself would prefer to have at his side during the remainder of his life a Polish soul and not a foreign one.

True, there was something homelike in her, but after all, she was not a Pole. "Identical blood has its own meaning; it cannot be helped," he further told Miss Anney. "So, since you are an Englishwoman, marry some Englishman or Scotchman, provided, however, you do not require me to form the acquaintance of such an ape and become intimate with him, for that is something I can dispense with perfectly." And at that moment he was seized with such a sudden, unexpected antipathy to that eventual Englishman "with projecting jaw" and Scotchman "with bare knees," that he felt that upon a trivial misunderstanding he could flog them. But through this attack of rage he roused himself completely from that half-drowsy, half-wakeful condition in which whimsical fancies mingle, and having recovered his senses, he experienced a great relief in the thought that the betrothed person beyond the sea was only a figment of his imagination, and at the same time a wave of gratitude towards Miss Anney surged in his heart. "Here I am, quarrelling with her and making reservations," he thought, "while she is snugly nestling her bright head upon a pillow and peacefully slumbering." Here again his blood began to frisk, but soon the perverse musings vanished. This became easier for him, as he was encompassed by a yearning for honest affection and for that future being, yet unnamed, who was to share his life. Again he resumed his imaginary conversation with Miss Anney, but this time in a meek spirit. He assured her, with a certain melancholy, that he was not solicitous about her, as he well knew that even if there were no obstacles she certainly would not have him, but that he was anxious that his future life-companion should resemble her a little; that she should have the same look and the same magnetic strength to which, if he did not succumb it would be a miracle. As to Miss Anney personally, plainly speaking, he owed only gratitude. Of course, nowhere

was it so well with him as at his beloved Jastrzeb, but nevertheless he could not deny that in that exclusive den it became lively and bright after her arrival; and that after her departure it would become darker, more dreary and monotonous than ever before. So for those bright moments he would willingly kiss her hand and, if that seemed insufficient to her, then her feet. In the meantime he begged her pardon for the mad thoughts which passed through his brain when he brushed against her shoulder in the salon, for though he was always of the opinion that responsiveness upon her part was worth the sacrifice of life, yet at the same time he had to contend that Dolhanski was a blockhead and cynic who meddled with matters which did not concern him and who was unworthy of notice. Here renewed rage against Dolhanski possessed him, and he continued for some time to toss from side to side until finally the late hour, youth, hungry for sleep, and weariness sprinkled his eyes with poppy.[1]

There was, however, in the Jastrzeb manor-house another who did not sleep and who talked with a person not present, and that was Laskowicz. After all that had taken place and what had been revealed in the past few days, he was prepared for his farewell parting with the Krzycki family, as he well knew that his further presence in Jastrzeb would be intolerable. And nevertheless he desired at present to stay in it, even though for a few days, in order that he might gaze longer upon Panna Marynia and, as he called it, "further narcotize himself." Somehow, from the first moment he had heard her play, she actually absorbed his thoughts in a way that no woman up to that time had done. Foremost among the prepared formalæ which he, with dogmatic faith, had adopted to judge mankind with, was the precept that a woman belonging

[1] "Sprinkled his eyes with poppy:" proverbial expression denoting "lulled to sleep." — Translator.

to the so-called pampered class was a thoughtless creature. In the meantime he had to dissent at once from that formula as a soul had spoken to him through the violin. Later he was astonished to find in that young lady two entities, one of which manifested itself in music as a finished artist, concentrated, filled with exaltation within herself, dissolved in the waves of tones and playing as if she drew the bow over her own nerves; the other appeared in every-day life in her customary relations with people. The latter seemed at the first glance of the eye, if not an insignificant, a common girl, full of simplicity and even gaiety, who screamed like a cat when Dolhanski, for instance, said things disagreeable to her; who jested with Gronski, telling him absurdities about spirits or, to the great alarm of Gronski and her older sister, fled into the garden for a boat ride on the pond. Laskowicz did not fully comprehend the world and was not a subtle person; nevertheless, he observed in the "common girl" something which made her, as it were, a little divinity, haloed with a quiet worship. Evidently she herself did not appear to be conscious of this and, viewing such a state of affairs as something which was self-understood, she lived the life of a flower or a bird. Confident that she will not suffer any harm from any one, gentle, bright, living beyond the misery and wretchedness of life, beyond its cares, beyond its chilling winds which dim the eyes with tears, beyond the dust which defiles, she resembled a pure spring which people look upon as blessed and whose translucency they fear to muddy. It seemed that the environment did not exact of her anything more than that she should exist, just as nothing more is demanded of a masterpiece.

To Laskowicz, as often as he gazed at her, there came recollection of his childhood days. He and his older brother, who, a few years before falling into consumption had committed suicide on the Riviera, were the sons of a

woman who conducted near one of the churches in Warsaw a shop for the sale of consecrated wax candles, medals, rosaries, and pictures. Owing to this, both brothers were, in a way, bred upon the church portals and were in constant relations with the priests. Once it happened that the aged canon, the rector of the church, bought at an auction an alabaster statuette of some saint, and for an unknown reason took it for granted that it was not only the work, but the masterpiece of Canova. The statuette, which, in reality, was pretty and finely executed, after consecration, was placed in a separate niche near one of the altars under the name of Saint Apollonia and from that time the gentle old rector surrounded it with great worship as a holy relic and with more particular care as the greatest church rarity. He led his guests and more pious parishioners before it and commanded them to admire the work and got angry if any one ventured to make any critical observation. In fact, the admiration of the canon was shared by the organist, the sexton, the church servants, and both boys. The thought that Panna Marynia amidst her environment was such a Saint Apollonia unwittingly suggested itself to Laskowicz. For that reason, after the first impression he called her "a saintly doll." But he also recalled that when in the course of time he lost his faith — and he lost it in the gymnasium where, speaking parenthetically, he completed his studies with the aid of the venerable canon — he often was beset with a desire to demolish that alabaster statuette. At present he was consumed with a greater desire, for it bordered upon a passion, to destroy this living one. And yet he did not in the least bear her any hatred. On the contrary, he could not resist the charm of this maiden, so loved by all, any more than one can resist the charm of dawn or spring. It even happened that what vexed and exasperated him also at the same time attracted him towards her with an un-

controllable force. Consequently he was drawn to her by her appurtenance to this world, the existence of which he deemed a social injustice, crime, and wrong; she attracted him in spite of his internal anguish, and even by the thought that beside such a flower the proletariat was but manure. A lure for him was her refined culture and her art, though he regarded such things as superfluous and unnecessary for people of deflorated life; the fascination was her utter dissimiliarity to the women whom he met up to the time of his arrival at the village, and her whole form was an intoxication. Never before was he under the same roof with a being like her; therefore he forgot himself and lost his head at the sight of her, and though he had not yet familiarized himself with the power which began to play in his bosom and had not christened it with the name of love, the truth was that during the past few days he was aflame like a volcano and loved her to distraction. He vaguely felt, however, that in this passion there was something of the lust of a negro for a white woman, and what was more, that in that particular love there was apostasy to principles. So then in the same germ he poisoned her with the virus of hatred and the wolfish propensity of annihilation.

And now he was summoning this "saintly doll" to come to him. Accepting, indiscriminately, and also with all that exaggeration peculiar to fanaticism and youth, everything which the books published as the results of the latest researches or phenomena in the domain of science, he believed that hypnotism was a secret and gigantic power which, when applied, would become invincible. Holding himself on the strength of experiments tried among his classmates as a hypnotizer, and considering the delicate and impressionable young girl an excellent medium, he was most firmly convinced that he could put her to sleep and command her from a distance. Conscience, indeed,

whispered to him that what he contemplated doing was an abuse of science, but he silenced that voice, persuading himself that it would at the same time be a triumph of a proletaire over this world, for which it is not permissible to have any pity, and that a man belonging to the camp which had declared a war of life and death on the entire social structure and "had appraised at their true worth" all current ideas has the right to and must be heedless.

Above all, however, he yearned to subjugate this elegant and immaculate maiden, to dominate not merely her body and soul, but also her will; to transform her into something like himself; to draw her to himself, to awaken within her the slumbering feminine instincts, to open before her the closed doors of passion; to inflame her, to embrace her, to toy with her, and afterwards keep her forever close to his bosom. And at that thought he was beset by a strange joy like that which madmen feel while profaning objects held in reverence and fear, and, simultaneously, lust and love within him intensified. He felt that after all that and for all of that, he would love this booty of his, this sacrifice, to distraction.

But as he was a madman only about the heart of a maid, and not a depraved man, he was at times possessed by a tenderness so great that if his summons were productive of any results he might not pass the bounds of transgression. But these were transient moments; after which, straining the whole strength of his will and the sight of his closely set eyes in the direction of Marynia's sleeping chamber he said and commanded: "Rise! — do not light the candles — do not awaken your sister — open the door quietly and walk in darkness on the path of my thoughts until you come to me, to my arms, to my bosom!" And he imagined that at any moment he would behold her, resembling that alabaster statuette, entering with the mechanical step of a somnambulist in a single gown, silvery,

dreamy, with head tilted backward, with closed eyes and opened lips drinking the lustre of the moon which shone in the windows. Afterwards he listened in the silence and, concentrating yet more powerfully his will, he repeated again with emphasis as if each word was chiselled out of stone: "Rise! do not light the candles — do not waken your sister — open the door — go on the path of my thoughts — and come!"

Horrible indeed would have been the fate of the young lady were it not for one fortunate circumstance, and that was that she never dreamt of rising, opening the door, going on the path of his thoughts, etc. On the contrary, she slept as peacefully as if an angel had bent over her and with the movements of her wings had driven away from her disquieting and feverish dreams. The little household fairies of Jastrzeb, such as those about which she spoke to Gronski, also did not disturb her repose. Perhaps some of them chased the moths from the windows in order that they might not make any noise by striking the window-panes; perhaps others, climbing the curtains and window sashes, gazed at her from a distance with their keen little eyes and whispered to each other: "Sleep, little maiden, who played for us on the violin — sleep — hush — let us not waken her." And though a desire to turn the pins of the violin and touch the chords with their tiny fingers may have taken hold of them, they did not, however, do so, through honesty and hospitality. Through the openings of the shutters the moonlight streamed in, brightening the interior and slowly advancing on the opposite wall. The silence was great; only somewhere beyond the house the night-watch on the premises whistled; while within the house the old standing clock, which measured the lives of several generations, continued to speak with resignation the "Tick! — Tack! — Tick!" of the seconds sinking into the past.

And Laskowicz in the course of time issued further commands from his room which reached no one's knowledge. A strange thing! Inwardly something was telling him with sober, almost absolute certainty that the maid would not come and he nevertheless believed that she ought to have come. Not until a long time elapsed, did the consciousness dawn upon him that if she did not come, then he, together with his hypnotism, played the rôle of an addlepated fool. Finally fatigue, disaffection, and anger at himself gripped him. Sleep irrevocably left him. Hour flew after hour. In the east the sky was deepening and it was becoming green. Soon the rosy lower border was striped with the transparent riband of dawn. The young student, not undressing himself at all, opened the window to breathe the bracing morning air. In the garden the first chirp of the birds began, and from the direction of the not distant pond, with the odor of the acacias, came the cries of herons and the subdued, as if yet sleepy, quacks of the wild ducks. After a while the sweep of the well creaked in the village.

It then occurred to Laskowicz that this was the last daybreak he was to behold in Jastrzeb; that on the morrow he would wake in the city and would not see either Panna Marynia or little Anusia whom only, of all the inmates of that Jastrzeb mansion, he liked; and he felt a little sorrow. But as he understood that, after the arrival of his party associates at Rzeslewo and yesterday's visit of the steward Kapuscinski to Krzycki, it was unavoidable, he preferred to tender his resignation rather than suffer a dismissal. With this intention, he decided to write a letter to Ladislaus and inform him that he had enough of pedagogical work. He foresaw that eventually they would have to see each other, if only at the payment of the salary, and as a dispute about principles might arise which might go very far, he had a revolver ready for certain contin-

gencies. He deemed that, before that happened, a dry, peremptory letter would be a step more consonant with his pride; therefore, when it was quite bright, he sat down immediately to write.

Krzycki awoke, though not in the dusk, nevertheless with the rise of the sun, for in the country he thus habituated himself to wake, regardless of whether he retired to bed early or late. He felt in his bones that he had had too little rest and, stretching out his arms, he said to himself that he would be repaid only in case Miss Anney at some time would learn that he lost that sleep for her sake and would pity him, though slightly. Meanwhile he recalled to his mind all that he was to do that day and formulated the following plan; he would rouse himself, drive out the lassitude in his bones; afterwards, before breakfast, would drive over to Rzeslewo and "look a little in the eyes of those worthies;" and if possible talk with the peasants; later he would return; after breakfast he would finish with Laskowicz and send him away with the team which was to bring the physician; the balance of his time, he would devote to the guests, to writing letters, and to the farm. He positively determined to go to Rzeslewo, because, though he agreed in his heart with Dolhanski that for the nonce he would be unable to accomplish anything, nevertheless, he did not wish the ladies to think that he stayed away through fear.

Having arranged everything in this manner, he carelessly put on his clothes and, slipping his feet into his slippers, repaired to the bath-room, without any foreboding that he would meet with an unusual accident and that he was soon to see, not in truth such an alabaster statuette as the one Laskowicz was raving about all night, but, at any rate, something resembling Diana in a fountain. In the second in which he opened the door he saw streams of water splashing and beheld under a shower-sprinkler a

nude, female figure, strewed with pearls of azure, with head somewhat inclined, and hands raised to her hair, whose black waves concealed her face. This lasted only a twinkle of the eye. A suppressed scream and the slam of the closed door resounded simultaneously. Krzycki rushed like the gale for his room; excited and at the same time shocked, he clutched with shaking hand a decanter, filled a glass of water, gulped it, and began to repeat confusedly: "What has happened? Who is she? For God's sake, what has happened?" In the first moments he conjectured that she might have been Pani Otocka, or Marynia, and in such a case the misadventure would be appalling. Those ladies would undoubtedly leave Jastrzeb at once and it would perhaps be incumbent upon him to propose marriage to the one whom he had seen in such paradisiacal shape. "But was it my fault?" he thought. "Why did n't she lock the door? There was a bolt." He drank another glass of water to cool his agitated blood and to think more calmly of what he was to do and who that nymph was. Somehow after an interval he reached the conclusion that she could not have been either of the sisters. Firstly, why should they rise so early? and again, both were slim, while this form was stouter and on the whole was built so, that — Oh! Oh! Finally, he became satisfied that it surely must have been no other than the brunette who obstructed his view of Miss Anney during the mass and whom he met on the dark walk when returning with Gronski from the hunt. If such was the case, nothing terrible had happened, but rather the contrary. It occurred to his mind that those blue window-panes were an excellent device, for in such a light the spectacle was delightful. At the thought of this, he felt the necessity of drinking a third glass of water. This, however, he did not do, but instead, after an interval, went again to the bath-room, which now was vacant,

and after a cool bath dressed himself and hastened to the stable. There he ordered a horse to be saddled and sped away on a gallop for adjacent Rzeslewo.

The day was mild; the hour very early. But all nature was already awake and bedewed, bathed in the sun, she appeared to simply cry out with joy, just as village maids from an excess of life and health sing unto forgetfulness, "Oj dana! Oj dana!" Birds carolled until the leaves on the trees trembled. In the distant oak grove resounded the coo-cooing of the cuckoo; yellow thrushes whistled amidst the boughs of lofty trees; from the depths of the forest, sounding like the noise of a sawmill, came the outcries of an old raven, watching a crowded nest, while from time to time the shrieks of a jay, resembling a laugh, burst forth.

Ladislaus rode out of the woods onto the open roadway. Here on one side was a stretch of waving grain; on the other a meadow — from which odors of turf and spring were wafted, — all overgrown with marigold and rose-campion, quivering in the solar warmth and under the gentle breath of the wind, as if in delight. This delight, this widespread joy and luxuriance of life overflowed in the breast of Ladislaus. He felt within himself such a vigor of youth and strength that he was prepared to challenge to a hand-to-hand combat full hundreds of socialists and at the same time press the whole world to his heart, especially women under the age of thirty. The white vision of that Diana, enveloped in a shell of blue pearls, again began to glide before his eyes, but he now thought that if, instead of dark tresses on the bowed head of that goddess, he had seen golden, he would have probably toppled over.

Amidst such sights and impressions he arrived at Rzeslewo, where, however, in conformity with Dolhanski's prediction, he was unable to accomplish anything. The

"worthies" whom he wanted to look in the eyes had left during the night time for the city; the husbandmen were in the field, each upon his own patch of ground; the blinds of the rectory were shut, as the rector for the last few days was feeling unwell. In the manor out-building where the laborers dwelt there was not a sign of a living soul. Later the old keeper of the stockyard informed him that the hired help, after watering the stock, drove it out into the pasture and went without asking the permission of any one to a church festival at Brzesno, whither many of the husbandmen and tenants had also gone.

So, then, here was a strike of farm-hands and open contumacy, but Krzycki was helpless. He only ordered the aged keeper of the stockyard to tell the hired help that there would come to Rzeslewo to establish order certain gentlemen before whom the vagabonds, who were there the previous day, would abscond as soon as they heard of them; after which he turned back and in half an hour was in Jastrzeb.

A servant told him that all were still asleep, excepting Laskowicz, who had charged him with the delivery of a letter. Krzycki took it and went with it to the office. Having read its contents, he rang for the servant.

"Was he dressed when he gave you the letter?"

"Yes, sir, and was packing his things."

"Ask him if he can come to my office, and if he can, request him to step in."

After a while, the young student entered the room.

Krzycki motioned to him to take a seat in the chair, which was near his desk.

"Good day, sir! I learn from your letter that you wish to leave Jastrzeb and that, at once. I presume that you have cogent reasons for this step. I therefore regard any discussion of them as superfluous, and will not detain you. Here you have what is due to you and the horses will be ready at any time you desire."

But Laskowicz, who in money matters was extremely scrupulous, after counting the money, said:

"You are paying me my whole salary, but as I am leaving before the expiration of the term, I am not entitled to pay for the last month."

And somewhat discourteously he flung the unearned balance upon the desk.

Krzycki's cheeks quivered slightly about the mustache, but as he had pledged himself before Gronski that he would not create any disturbance and had made the same promise to himself, he quietly replied:

"As you please."

"As for the departure," said Laskowicz, "I would prefer to leave at once."

"As you please," repeated Krzycki. "In an hour I will send after the physician for my mother and if it is convenient for you, you may go with that team."

"Very well."

"Then the whole thing is settled. I will give orders at once."

Saying this, he rose and closed the desk, as if he wished to intimate that the interview was over. Laskowicz glared at him with eyes blazing with hatred. He did not seek any broil, but anticipating one, he stood before Krzycki, bent like a bow. Meanwhile nothing approaching an altercation occurred and the revolver, which he had ready for a certain contingency, was of no service to him. There was no reference even to the letter, though that was indited in harsh and rude terms. Nevertheless there was something offensive in the cold tones in which Krzycki spoke, something insulting in the eagerness with which he accepted his offer of departure. To Laskowicz, who viewed everything from his own standpoint, it seemed that the icy conversation accentuated something else, namely, the attitude of a wealthy man who owned Jastrzeb, a desk

filled with money, horses, and equipages, towards a poor, homeless fellow. But it did not occur to him at that moment that he on his part had done nothing to improve their relations, but on the contrary had done a great deal to make them worse, and that from the time of his arrival he had shut himself, like a turtle in a shell, in a doctrine inimical to these people. Everything conduced to stir the bile within him to such a degree that he actually regretted that the matter did not end in a personal encounter. But as in the words of Krzycki there was nothing which gave him a pretext for one, he abruptly left the room without any leave-taking and with redoubled rancor.

Ladislaus rang to have the horses ready within an hour, and as it happened to be Friday, he ordered the gardener to catch some fish; after which he began to consider whether the affair with Laskowicz had terminated in a desirable way. He was pleased and displeased with himself. He felt a certain satisfaction and even pride in the fact that he could be laconic and firm, cold but polite, and that he did not stoop to any ruffianly dispute. But at the same time, notwithstanding his pride, a certain disrelish remained, for which he could not account as he was not sufficiently developed psychologically. He kept repeating to himself that such scenes are always disagreeable, and so was the whole business. In reality there was another reason for it. His whole behavior, which appeared to him so temperate, sensible, and well-nigh diplomatic, did not emanate from his temperament, but in direct opposition to his not too deep, but open and impulsive nature. If he had acted in keeping with it, he either would have come to blows with the young student or else would have said something like this: "You have strewn our path with thorns and have upset the minds of our people, but since you are leaving, give me your hand and may you fare well." The one or the other act would have been more consistent with his

character, and he would not have experienced that jarring which he could not understand, but felt none the less.

But further reflections were interrupted by the servant with the announcement that breakfast was ready and that the guests were at the table. In fact, all had already assembled in the dining-room, through which pervaded the odor of coffee and the hum of the samovar. At the sight of the white dresses of the ladies and their fresh, well-rested countenances, Ladislaus' soul gladdened to such an extent that he immediately forgot all squabbles and vexations. By way of greeting, he kissed Pani Otocka's hand; then, as if absent-mindedly, that of Miss Anney, but so forcibly that she reddened like a cherry; after which he squeezed Marynia's hand, saluted the gentlemen and began to cry merrily:

"Coffee! coffee! From the rise of the sun I drank only two glasses of water and I am as hungry as a wolf."

"Was that a cure? Did you have a fever?" asked Dolhanski.

"Perhaps I did have a fever, but nevertheless I had a horseback ride to Rzeslewo and transacted a thousand matters."

"How is it in 'rustic-angelic' Rzeslewo," interrupted Dolhanski.

"There is nothing further that is disturbing. Those trouble makers whom I wished to look at, in the eyes, are gone. But now above all things, I want coffee and will not answer any more questions."

Marynia, as the substitute of Pani Krzycki, who remained in bed owing to rheumatism, poured out the coffee for him, and he also kissed the hand of his young cousin; whereat she was pleased as she fancied that it added to her dignity.

"That is due me as a vice-hostess," she said, shaking her head.

"And especially taking age into consideration," added Dolhanski.

She did not show him her tongue only because she was too well-bred.

But Dolhanski, who suffered from catarrh of the stomach, gazed enviously at Ladislaus, eating with such relish, and said:

"What an appetite! A genuine cannibal."

"Go also over the road a mile before breakfast and you will have the same appetite. But cannibal or no cannibal, when I entered this room, I was ready to devour even this bouquet of flowers which is before me."

"The time will come when the country nobility will not have anything else to eat," replied Dolhanski.

But Marynia quickly seized the bouquet and, laughing, shoved it to the other side of the table.

"After coffee there is no fear," cried Ladislaus. "But what beautiful field flowers! Did you ladies pick them?"

"We are sleepy-heads," answered Pani Otocka; "they were gathered by Aninka's servant."

Aninka was the pet name which both sisters gave Miss Anney.

Ladislaus turned a sharp glance towards the ladies, but as their faces were perfectly calm, he thought:

"She gathered the flowers and did not mention the mishap."

And Miss Anney, turning the bouquet about and examining it, said:

"An apple-blossom is in the middle, — the good-for-nothing girl plucked it from some little tree, for which she must be reprimanded; these are spearwort, those primroses, and those pennyroyal, which are now coming out."

"It is, however, astonishing that you speak Polish so well," observed Dolhanski; "why, you even know the names of plants."

"I heard them from the lips of the village maids in Zalesin at Zosia's," answered Miss Anney. "Besides, I evidently possess linguistic abilities for I learned from them to speak in a rustic style."

"Truly," cried Ladislaus, "could you say something in peasant fashion. Say something, Miss Anney! Do!" he entreated, folding his hands as if in prayer.

She began to laugh and feigning shyness, bowed her head and putting the back part of her hand to her forehead, as bashful peasants girls usually do, said, drawling each word somewhat:

"I would do that only I do not dare—"

Laughter and bravos resounded; only Pani Zosia glanced at her with a peculiar look and she, by becoming confused, enhanced her beauty to such an extent that Ladislaus was completely captivated.

"Ah! now one could lose his head," he cried with unfeigned ardor. "I pledge my word, one could lose his head."

And Gronski, who in common with the others fell into good humor, said in a low voice:

"And even consummatum est."

But further conversation was interrupted by the rattle of the carriage wheels which could be heard in the courtyard and ceased at the balcony.

"What is that?" asked Gronski.

"I am sending for the doctor for Mother," answered Ladislaus, rising. "Whoever has any errands in the city may speak."

Dolhanski and Gronski also rose and went out with him into the vestibule.

"I was about to ask you for a horse," said Gronski. "I know that you have but one saddle for ladies in Jastrzeb, so I ordered another one and must receive it in person at the post-office. I did not want to speak about it before the ladies as it is to be a surprise."

"Good!" answered Krzycki, "but I will give you another carriage, for Laskowicz is leaving by this one and you surely would prefer not to ride with him."

"He?" cried Dolhanski. "You do not know him then. He is ready to ride with old Aunt Beelzebub, if he could pull her by the tongue and do all the talking and descanting."

"There is a little truth in that," said Gronski. "I am a veritable chatterbox. Indeed, I will willingly go with Laskowicz and will try to get him into a talkative mood for, after all, he does interest me. Did you conclude with him this morning?"

"Yes. I must see Mother for a while and tell her about it. I finished with him and in addition finished peaceably. I, at least, was perfectly calm."

"So much the better. Go to your mother and I will go to my room for a linen duster; for the dust on the road must be quite thick. I will be back soon."

In fact he returned in a few minutes, dressed in a linen coat. About the same time a servant brought down Laskowicz's trunk, and soon the latter appeared, wrapped up in himself and gloomy as night, for the thought that he would not behold his "alabaster statuette" filled him with pain and sorrow; the more so, as after those hypnotic exertions, when daylight restored him to his senses, he began to feel guilty of an offence against her. Instead of swallowing with unnecessary haste his breakfast in his room upstairs, he might have come downstairs and gazed upon Pani Marynia for half an hour longer; but he had not wished to do that because, in the first place, he had not cared to meet Krzycki and, again, he felt that in such company he would enact the rôle of Pilate in Credo. At that moment he regretted that he had not come down and feasted his eyes with her form for the last time.

But a pleasant surprise awaited him when the young

ladies, in the company of Dolhanski and Ladislaus, came out on the balcony; and afterwards little Anusia, with whom he was always on friendly terms, having learned that he was leaving, ran with eyes overflowing with tears, pouting lips, and a bunch of flowers in her chubby fist to bid him good-bye. The young student took the flowers from her, kissed her hand, and with heavy heart sat in the carriage beside Gronski, who in the meantime was chatting with Pani Otocka.

Anusia descended the stairs of the balcony and stood close to the carriage doors; upon perceiving which Marynia hastened after her and, evidently fearing that the little girl might be jolted when the carriage started to move, took her hand and began to comfort her.

"Of course he will not forget you," she said, bending over the little girl, "he surely will write to you and when he becomes very lonesome, will return."

After which, raising her eyes directly at Laskowicz:

"Is it not true, sir? You will not forget her?"

Laskowicz gazed into the depths of the pellucid pupils of her eyes, as if he wished to penetrate them to the bottom, and being really moved, replied with emphasis:

"I will not forget."

"Ah, you see," and Marynia pacified Anusia.

But at that moment Krzycki approached.

"Mother directed me to bid you God-speed." And he immediately shouted to the driver: "Drive on."

The carriage moved, described a circle in the court-yard, and disappeared on the avenue beyond the gate.

Miss Anney and the two sisters now went to Pani Krzycki, desiring to keep her company at breakfast, which she on the days of her painful suffering ate in bed. Ladislaus, recalling that he ordered some fish to be caught, walked directly across the garden towards the pond to see whether the catch was successful.

But before he reached the bank, at a turning of the shady yoked elm lane, he unexpectedly met his morning's vision of "Diana in the fountain."

At the sight of him the maid stood still; at first her countenance flushed as if a live flame passed through it; after which she grew so pale that the dark down above her lips became more marked, and she stood motionless, with downcast eyes and heaving breast, bewildered and abashed.

But he spoke out with perfect freedom:

"Good-day! good-day! Ah, what is your name?"

"Pauline," she murmured, not raising her eyes.

"A beautiful name." After which, he smiled somewhat roguishly and added:

"But Panna Pauly — the next time — there is a bolt."

"I will drown myself," cried the maid in a hysterical voice.

And he began to speak in persuasive tones:

"Why? For what? Why, no one is to blame, — that was a pure accident. I will not tell anybody about it and that I had seen such beauty; that was only my luck."

And he proceeded to the fishing place.

She followed his shapely form with her tear-dimmed eyes and stood on the spot for quite a while in reverie, for it seemed to her that by reason of the secret known to them alone something had transpired between them which would unite them forever.

And afterwards when she recollected how that charming young heir of Jastrzeb had seen her, she shuddered from head to foot.

X

GRONSKI was a man of gentle and kindly disposition. Notwithstanding his penchant for philosophical pessimism, he was not a pessimist in his relations to men and life. Speaking in other words, in theory he often thought like Ecclesiastes; in practice he preferred to tread in the footsteps of Horace, or rather as Horace would have trodden had he been a Christian. Continual communing with the ancient world gave him a certain serenity, not divested indeed of melancholy, but peaceful and harmonious. Owing to his high education and extensive reading, which enabled him to come in contact with all ideas which found lodgment in the human mind and familiarize himself with all forms of human life, he was exceedingly tolerant, and the most extreme views did not lead him into that condition which would cause him to screech like a frightened peacock. This deep forbearance and this conviction that all that is taking place has to occur, did not deprive him of energy of thoughts or words; it deprived him, however, in some measure of the ability to act. He was more of a spectator than an actor on the world's stage, but a well-disposed spectator, acutely susceptible and extraordinarily curious. He sometimes compared himself to a man sitting on the bank of a river and watching its course, who knows indeed that it must roll on and disappear in the sea, but who is nevertheless interested in the movements of its waves, its currents, its whirlpools, mists rising from its depths, and the play of light upon its waters. Besides his genuine love of ancient languages and authors,

Gronski was interested in politics, science, literature, art, the contemporary social tendencies, and finally in the private affairs of mankind; and this last to such an extent that he was reluctantly charged with undue love of knowledge of his fellow-men. From this general, lively curiosity flowed his loquacity and desire to expatiate upon anything which passed before his eyes. He was well aware of this, and jocosely justified himself before his friends by citing Cicero, who according to him was one of the greatest discoursers and meddlers whose memory is preserved by history. Aside from these weaknesses, Gronski possessed a highly developed capacity for sympathizing with human suffering and human thoughts, and was on the whole a man of fine sentiment. Poland he loved sincerely as he wished her to be; that is, noble, enlightened, cultured, as European as possible, but not losing her Lechite traits, and holding in her hand the flag with the white eagle. That eagle seemed to him to be one of the noblest symbols on earth.

Within the compass of his personal feelings, as a man and æsthete, he loved Marynia, but it was a love of a heavenly-blue hue, not scarlet. At the beginning he admired within her, as he said, "the music and the dove;" afterwards, not having any near relatives, he became attached to her like an older brother to a little sister, or as a father to a child. She, on her part, grateful for this attachment and at the same time esteeming his mind and character, reciprocated with her whole heart.

In the main, human sympathy and friendship encompassed Gronski, for even strangers, even people separated from him by a chasm of belief and convictions, even those whom he annoyed with his habit of pressing his forefinger to his forehead and thinking aloud, esteemed him for his ability to sympathize, his humanity and forbearance, which were like the open doors of a hospitable house.

Laskowicz also felt this. If he was to ride with Dolhanski, for instance, he would have preferred to go afoot and carry his luggage on his back. But Dolhanski in Jastrzeb pretended not to see him at all, while Gronski always greeted him amiably, and several times opened a conversation with him which never was lengthy for the reason that Laskowicz limited it and broke it off. Now, however, sitting beside Gronski he was pleased with his company. He cherished in his soul a hope that Gronski, speaking of the persons remaining in Jastrzeb, would say something about Panna Marynia and he craved to hear her name. Besides, he was moved by the leave-taking with little Anusia, for it happened for the first time in his life that any one bidding him farewell had tears in her eyes, and he was grateful to the chance which afforded him an opportunity of exchanging a few words with Panna Marynia before driving away. So his heart melted and he was willing to talk sincerely, especially with a man against whom he felt no antipathy.

Somehow they did not wait long, for they had barely reached the end of the avenue when Gronski, with the kind and confidential anxiety of an older man who does not understand what has taken place and is ready to grumble, placed his hand upon his knee and said:

"My dear sir, what mischief have you stirred up in Rzeslewo? It may now come to some serious collisions, and it is said that you people intend to do the same everywhere."

"In Rzeslewo we did what the good of our idea demanded," answered Laskowicz.

"But an agricultural school is involved and such schools are absolutely necessary for the people. Why did you circulate the story among the peasants that the land was to be divided among them?"

Laskowicz hesitated as to whether to leave the question

unanswered, but he was disarmed by Gronski's countenance, at once benevolent and worried, so he replied:

"Every party must keep its eyes upon everything in order to know what is occurring in the country and take advantage of its opportunities. In the case of Rzeslewo I was the eye of the party, and in the further course of time I acted in accordance with the directions sent to me. In reality, we could not foresee how the deceased would dispose of his estate. But that is all one. We do not need schools founded by the classes with which we are at war and conducted in their spirit."

"You do not need them, but the people need them."

"The people can learn husbandry without the assistance of the nobility as soon as they own something on which they can learn. The lands of the nobles will be more beneficial to them than their schools. They have tilled that soil of Rzeslewo for hundreds of years, and if you figure at the rate of one penny for each day's labor, that land has been paid for a hundred times more than it is worth."

"But you arouse merely a desire for land; you cannot give it. Besides, permit me, sir, to say that in respect to your doctrine you are illogical. For, of course, your aim is to nationalize the land. Now such land as that of Rzeslewo, for instance, donated for school purposes is, in a manner, nationalized; but a partition of it among the peasants would disintegrate it into individual ownership by a number of small holders."

"The nationalization of land is our ultimate object, therefore distant. In the meantime we want to get the people into our camp, so we use such means as will lead to that end. We cannot give the land, but the people themselves can take it."

"The most you can accomplish is to get them to take it. Assume that in Rzeslewo the husbandmen, tenants, and

hired hands seize the land and divide it between them. What follows? Do you not see the clashes, the knouting, the courts and sanguinary executions which will overtake them?"

"Do you not believe that this would be water for our mill? The more there is of that, the sooner our end will be attained."

"And so I guessed rightly," said Gronski, recalling his statement to Ladislaus and Dolhanski that the summoning of the police would be playing into the hands of the agitators.

Laskowicz wanted to ask what Gronski had guessed rightly, but the latter forestalled him and continued:

"There is another singular thing. If misfortune overtakes any one of you, whether imprisonment, deportation, or death, then we, that is, the people who do not belong to your ranks, the people against whom you have declared war to the death, say: 'Too bad! such zeal! what a pity — such misguided sacrifice! how deplorable, — such a young head!' and we grieve for you. But you do not regret those people whose defenders you proclaim yourself to be. You arrange industrial strikes and pull the string until it breaks and later, when the manufacturers tie it again it becomes shorter than ever before. Already thousands are dying of starvation. And now you want an agricultural strike, after which bread becomes dearer and scarcer. Who suffers by this? Again the people. Truly at times it is impossible to resist the thought that you love your doctrines more than the people."

To this Laskowicz answered in a harsh, hollow voice:

"That is war. There must be sacrifices."

Gronski involuntarily looked at him and, seeing his eyes set so closely to each other, thought:

"No! Such eyes really can only look straight ahead and are incapable of taking in a wider horizon."

For some time they rode in silence. A light southern breeze rose and bore with the cloud of dust the odor of the horses' sweat. From thickets on the wayside flew swarms of horse-flies, which pestered the horses so much that the coachman brushed their backs with the whip and swore.

Suddenly Gronski asked:

"Sacrifices! But to what divinity do you offer those sacrifices? What is your aim and what do you want?"

"Daily bread and universal liberty."

"But in the meantime, instead of bread, you give them stones. As to liberty, you will please, sir, take into consideration two thoughts. The first can be expressed thus: Woe to the nations that love liberty more than fatherland! Naturally I am not speaking of subjugated nations, for in such a situation the conceptions of liberty and fatherland become almost identical. But consider, sir, what really caused the political downfall of Poland and what is blighting France, which before our eyes is falling apart like a barrel without hoops? A second thought which often comes to my mind is that liberty crossing the boundaries set by national prosperity and safety is necessary only for rogues. You certainly will regard this last opinion as the acme of retrogression, but it is none the less the truth."

Laskowicz's face reflected suspicion and offence, but it was so apparent that Gronski did not allude to him personally, and was only ennunciating a general view, that he did not break off further conversation.

"Liberty of association and syndicates," he said, "by the aid of which the proletariat is defending itself, do not endure any limitations. You, sir, after all confuse the conceptions of the people and the empire; — as a realist you are concerned above all about the empire."

And Gronski began to laugh:

"I, a realist?" he said. "I do not belong to the realists.

They are not foolish people and on the whole act in good faith, but they commit one error. They go out to plough for the spring sowing in December; that is when the ploughshares cannot break the frozen ground. Or if you prefer another comparison, they buy their summer clothing during the severest winter season. I do not know; perhaps the sun will at some time shine and it will be warm, as everything in this world is possible, but in the meantime the ears are frost-bitten and the moths destroy the clothes."

And thinking only of the realists, he continued:

"Realists desire to reckon with this reality, which does not want to reckon with them or anybody else. For assume, sir, for example, that the name of a faction is Peter and this Peter in perfect sincerity turns to Reality and says: 'Listen, oh Maiden! I am prepared to acknowledge you and even love you, but in return permit me to stand on my own feet, to breathe a little and stretch out my aching bones.' And Reality with true Ural affability answers: 'Peter, my son Peter, you are wandering from the subject, and I take away from you the right to speak. I am not concerned about your acknowledging or loving me, but only that you should unbutton yourself, divest yourself of certain clothes which, speaking parenthetically, may be of service to me; that you should again lie upon that bench and as to the rest trust in my power and whip.' If any realist heard me he might dispute this, but in his soul, he would concede the justness of the illustration."

"You will admit, then," exclaimed Laskowicz, with a certain triumph, "that we alone are hitting this Reality on the head?"

"You are hitting her," answered Gronski, "but your fists rebound from her stony head and land in the pit of your own community, which loses its remnant of breath and swoons. By this, you even aid Reality."

And here recollecting what he had said about the ant-hills and ant-eaters, he repeated it to Laskowicz.

But Laskowicz would not agree to the comparison, observing that it had only a specious appearance of the truth, for the human conditions could not be adjusted by conditions existing in an ant-hill.

"Whoever aspires to make the proletariat powerful by the same act gives the nation new strength sufficient to repel all attacks and blows. Only on this road can anything be gained, though only for the simple reason that it will have allies in the proletariat of adjoining countries, who from enemies will become friends."

"That would only be a coalition at the bottom," said Gronski.

"And for that reason irrepressible and effectual. For we are continually hearing of Poland! Poland! But those who all the time are repeating that combine with Poland various things which have outlived their usefulness, such as religion, church, and conservatism, which cover her with mould or with corpses which already are rotting. We alone unite Poland with an idea, powerful, young, and vital, if only for the reason that all youth is with us."

"In the first place, not all youth, nor even one half," answered Gronski; "and again, the church has survived and will survive many a social movement; and thirdly, your idea is as ancient as poverty itself on this earth. If you desire, sir, to contend that the form which La Salle and Marx gave it is new, then I will answer you thus: Your modern socialism has too thick tufts of hair on its scalp, but when it begins to get bald, none will scoff at it so much as the young."

"You are continually speaking in aphorisms, but fortunately aphorisms are like paper lanterns hung on the trees of dialectics; in the dark they can be seen; in the broad daylight they are extinct."

"Behold another aphorism, cut and dried," answered Gronski, laughing. "No, sir, that which I said had another meaning. I wanted to say that the socialist commonwealth, if you ever establish one, will be such a surrender of human institutions, such a jamming of man into the driving-wheels of the general mechanism, such a restraint and slavery that even the present kingdom of Prussia, in comparison, would be a temple of liberty. And in reality, a reaction would set in at once. The press, literature, poetry, and art, in the name of individualism and its freedom, would declare an inexorable war; and do you know, sir, who would carry the banner of the opposition? Youth! That is as true as that those lapwings are now flying over that meadow."

And here he pointed at a flock of lapwings, hovering over a field on which cattle were grazing. After which he added:

"In France it is already beginning. Not long ago a few thousand students paraded the streets of Paris, shouting: 'Down with the Republic!'"

"That is merely swinging around in a circle," replied Laskowicz; "that was a clash with radicalism and not with us. We also despise it. The bourgeoisie imagine that radicalism in a certain emergency will shield them from the revenge of the proletariat, but they are deceiving themselves. In the meanwhile they are clearing the way for the revolution."

"In this I admit you are right;" answered Gronski, "I saw in Cairo how the *saïs* ran before the carriages of the pashas shouting, 'Out of the way! Out of the way!' Radicalism is performing the same service for you."

"Yes," corroborated Laskowicz, with a brightened countenance.

Gronski took off his spectacles to wipe off the dust and winked his eyes.

"But amongst you there are also differences. The French socialism is different, so is the German, and the English, and in their midst we find opposing camps. For that reason I shall not speak of socialism in general. I am only interested in the home product, of which you are an agent; for, from what you have said, I infer that you belong to the so-called Polish Socialistic party."

"Yes," answered Laskowicz with energy.

Gronski replaced the cleaned spectacles and unfurled all his sails:

"You claim, therefore, that in the name of Poland you have joined youth with a powerful idea, through which you have infused into her veins new blood. And I reply that this idea, whatever it may be, has degenerated in your minds to the extent that it ceased to be a social idea and has become a social disease. You have infected Poland with a disease and nothing more. The new Polish edifice must be constructed with bricks and stones and not with bombs and dynamite. And in you there is neither brick nor stone. You are only a shriek of hatred. You have abandoned the old gospels and are incapable of creating a new one; in consequence of which you cannot offer any pledge of life. Your name is Error and for that reason the resultant force of your activities will be contrary to you presuppositions. By pulling the strings of strikes you lead the people to naught else than to debility and wretchedness and from feeble beggars you are not able to build a powerful Poland. That is the actual fact. Besides, on one and the same head you cannot wear two caps unless one is underneath. So I ask which is underneath? Is your socialism only a means of building Poland? Or is your Poland only a bait and catchword to gather the people into your camp? The socialists, who call themselves socialists without any qualifications and do not insist that the same entity can be fish and fowl at the same time,

are, I admit, more logical. But you mislead the people. The truth is that even if you wanted to you could not do anything Polish, for there is nothing Polish in you. The schools from which you graduated did not take away the language, for they could not do that, but they molded your minds and souls in such a manner that you are not Poles, but Russians despising Russia. How Poland and Russia will fare by this is another matter, but such is the case. To you it seems that you are making a revolution, but it is an ape of a revolution, and in addition a foreign one. You are the evil flower of a foreign spirit. It is enough to take your periodicals, your writers, poets, and critics! Their whole mental apparatus is foreign. Their real aim is not even socialism nor the proletariat, but annihilation. — Firebrand in hand, and at the bottom of their souls hopelessness and the great nihil! And of course we know where it originated. The Galician socialism likewise is not an Apollo Belvedere, but nevertheless it has different lineaments and less broad cheek-bones. There is not in it this rabidness and also this despair and sorrow which conflicts with the Latin culture. You are like certain fruit: on one side green, on the other rotten. You are sick. That sickness explains the limitless want of logic, based on this; that crying against wars, you create war; decrying courts-martial, you condemn without any trial; and denouncing capital punishment, you thrust revolvers in the hands of the people and say, 'Kill.' This disease also explains your insane outbreaks, your indifference to consequences, and to the fate of those ill-fated men whom you make your tools. Let them assassinate, let them rob the treasuries, but whether later they will hang in the halter is a matter of little consequence to you. Your nihil permits you to spit upon blood and ethics. You open wide the doors to notorious scoundrels and allow them to represent not their own villany, but your idea. You, generally speaking, carry

ruin with you and join Poland to that ruin. In your party there are, without doubt, men of conviction and good faith, but blind, who in their blindness are serving a different master than they imagine."

Gronski knew that he was speaking in vain, but whether from habit, or because he wanted to relieve himself of all that had accumulated within him, he talked until the rattle of the wheels on the city pavements drowned his words. They parted rather coldly before the hotel, for Gronski's views touched the young medical student to the quick. He did not admit that Gronski was in the least right, but that such views should be entertained filled him with rage and indignation. He indeed said to himself, "It is not worth while answering, but our minds are not foreign, and our idea is new. Society is like a person who, having for many years lived in a house, is always reluctant to move into another though that other is much better." Nevertheless the words of Gronski stung him so deeply that at that moment he hated him as much as he did Krzycki and would have given a great deal if he could trample upon and crush the charges, so odious to him. Unfortunately for him he lacked time for it, and besides, weariness after a sleepless night began to overpower him more and more.

Gronski went to the post-office, received a package with the saddle, and afterwards drove to the doctor's, but learning that the latter would not be free for an hour, he left the carriage at his door and went to visit the old notary and at the same time deliver to him an invitation from Krzycki to visit Jastrzeb.

The notary was pleased to receive the invitation, as he had decided to visit the Krzyckis without one, in order, as he said, to behold the "eyes of his head" and hear her miracle-working violin. In the meantime he began to speak about the events which had occurred in the city and neighborhood. He was so impressed and affected by them

that his customary choler left him, and in his words there was an undertone of bitter sorrow and heavy anxiety for the future of the community, which seemed to have lost its head. Factory strikes and to some extent agricultural strikes were spreading. In the city the lime-kilns had ceased to burn and the cement works were at a standstill. The workingmen, who, not having any savings, formerly lived from hand to mouth, in the first moments lacked bread. After the example of Warsaw, a local committee was organized for the purpose of collecting funds to prevent starvation. But as a result, this peculiar situation was created: the people most opposed to the cessation of work encouraged it by furnishing food to the idle. "A veritable round of errors!" said the worried old gentleman. "Do not give; then starvation follows and despair hurls the workingman into the arms of the socialists; give, and you also are playing into their hands, because they have something with which to support the strike and can convince the people of their omnipotence." He further related that outside of the committee the socialists were collecting money, or rather were extorting it from the timid by threats; that they called upon him but he told them that he would give for bread but not for bombs. They then threatened him with death, for which he had them thrown out of his office.

For a while he remained silent for the inborn choler assumed supremacy over sorrow; he also began to roll his eyes angrily and moved his jaws furiously, as if he wanted to eat all the socialists, together with their red standard.

Afterwards, when his rage had spent itself, he continued:

"Day before yesterday they sent me a sentence of death which they surely will execute, as they have declared war against the government and they butcher their own countrymen. Well, that is a small matter! Three days ago they

killed a master tinner and two workingmen in the cement factory. In Wilczodola, a few versts from here, they waylaid and maimed Pan Baezynski and robbed the branch office of the governmental whiskey monopoly besides. Szremski, that doctor for whom you came and whose optimism sticks like a bone in my throat, says that it is but a passing storm! Yes, everything does pass away, individuals as well as whole nations. I fear that ours too is passing away; for we have become a nation of bandits and banditism never can be a permanent institution. Well! The people, after these acts of violence, have in reality become tired of robbing for the benefit of their party and now prefer to rob on their own account. Do I know whether we will arrive alive at Krzyckis to-day? Bah! Krzycki ought to be more on his guard than any one else. He passes for a rich man and for that reason they will keep him in their eye. I will go to Jastrzeb for if I am to be assassinated, before it takes place I want to hear once more our child-wonder. But in truth, Krzycki, instead of inviting more guests, should dismiss those who are staying there now. The doctor, if he had any sense, would find an excuse for dispersing them all to-morrow."

"I heard that he is an excellent man," said Gronski.

"An excellent devil!" answered the notary. "You remember whom you have among you, and it is only about her that I am concerned."

Gronski, though disquieted and distressed by Dzwonkowski's narrative, could not refrain from laughing when he heard the last admonition, for translated into plain words it meant, "May the deuce impale you all, if only no evil befalls the little violinist." But whenever Marynia was involved he himself was always willing to subscribe to similar sentiments; therefore he began to pacify the aged official by telling him that in Jastrzeb there were, counting the guests and manor people, too many hands and too

many arms to have any fears of an attack; and that, besides, Pani Krzycki's probable departure would end the visit of the guests. Further conversation was broken by the arrival of Doctor Szremski who, having dashed in like a bomb, announced that he was free for the remainder of the day and could ride with Gronski.

Gronski gazed at him with great interest, for even in Warsaw he heard of him as an original and prominent personality, in the favorable meaning of those words.

He was quite a young man, with tawny hair, swarthy like a gypsy, with a countenance alive with fire, bubbling with health, somewhat loud and brisk in his manners. In the city he played an uncommon rôle not only because he had the largest medical practice, but because he belonged to the most active men in any field. He entered into every project as if to an attack, and thanks to a sober and an exceptional temper of mind, whatever he did was done, on the whole, sensibly and well. He was, as it were, a personification of that phenomenon, frequent in Poland, where, when amidst a public not only trammelled but negligent and indolent by nature, a man of energy and with an idea is found, he is able to accomplish more than any German, Frenchman, or Englishman could have done. He himself participated in every undertaking and compelled others to work with such spirit that he was nicknamed "Doctor Spur." He established secret schools, reading rooms, nurseries for the children, economical associations, and for everything he gave money, of which he earned a great deal, though he treated gratis throngs of the penniless. The local socialists hated him, for by his popularity and influence with the workingmen he frustrated their efforts. The authorities looked at him with suspicion and with an evil eye. A man who loved his country, organized life, spread enlightenment, and donated money for public uses, must in their eyes be a suspicious character

and deserved at least deportation to a "distant province." Fortunately for him, the governor's wife imagined that she was suffering from some nervous ailment and the local captain of the gendarmery was actually troubled with incipient aneurism of the aorta. So then the governor's wife, who through her connections had made her husband governor and ruled the province as she pleased, was of the opinion that if it were not for this "l'homme qui rit" (as she called the doctor), eternal mourning would have befallen the governor, and the captain of the gendarmes feared alike the gubernatorial connections and the aneurism. He had indeed prepared a report which he regarded as the masterpiece of his life; and perhaps he became ill because he dared not send it to the higher authorities. Sometimes in his dreams, he arrested the doctor, subjected him to an examination, forced him to divulge his accomplices, and dreamt also that the report might be used in case the governor and himself were transferred to another province; but it was only a dream. In reality the report reposed on the bottom of a drawer and the doctor, who read it (for the captain showed it to him in proof of what he could have done but did not do), laughed so ingenuously and was so confident of himself that it occurred to the captain's mind that in reality there was no joking with the governor's wife or the aneurism.

The doctor laughed because he was by nature unusually jovial. In certain cases he could think and speak gravely, but at chance meetings and at casual talks, in which there was no time for weighty discourse, he preferred to slide over the surface of the subject, scatter jests, and tell anecdotes, which later were repeated over the city, and which he himself much enjoyed. His optimism and beaming countenance created incurable optimism and hope and good thoughts wherever he appeared. He joked with the sick about their sickness and with jokes dispelled

their fears. His mirth won the people and a well-grounded medical knowledge and efficacious watchfulness over their health and lives assured him a certain kind of sway over them. For this reason he did not mind the "big fish," or in fact anybody. Such was the case with the notary whose perpetual choler and irascibility were known all over the city, so that social relations with him were maintained only by those who were exceptionally interested in music. The doctor, who also cracked jokes about music, sought his company, purposely to nettle him and afterwards to tell about his outbreaks, to his own amusement and that of his hearers.

And now he rushed in with the crash of a squall, became acquainted with Gronski, asked about the health of Pani Krzycki and about the pretty ladies staying in Jastrzeb of whom he had already heard; after which, observing the distressed face of the notary, he exclaimed merrily:

"What a mien! Is it so bad with us in this world, or what? Seventy-five years! A great thing! Truly it is not the age of strength, but it is the strength of the age! Please show your pulse!"

Here, without further asking the notary, he grabbed his hand, and pulling out his watch, began to count:

"One, two — one, two! — one, two! Bad! It is the pulse of one in love. There are symptoms of a slight heartburn! Such is usually the case. Such a machine cannot last more than twenty-five years, — at the most thirty. Thank you!"

Saying this he dropped the old man's hand, whose mien brightened in expectation, for he thought that twenty-five years added to what he had already lived would make quite a respectable age.

Pretending, however, to scowl, he answered:

"Always those jokes! The doctor thinks that I care for those wretched twenty-five years. It is not worth while

living now. Of course you know what is taking place. I have such a mien because I was just talking with Pan Gronski about it. I also have a heartburn. Well, I ask what will become of us if all the people should follow the socialists?"

But the doctor began to swing his arms and deny this categorically. Not all the people, nor a half, nor a hundredth part. And even those who say that they belong to the socialists say so under terror or through misapprehension.

"I will give you gentlemen two examples," he said. "I live on a lower floor and beneath me in the basement there is a locksmith's shop. This morning I overheard fragments of a conversation between my servant and the locksmith. The locksmith said, 'I am a socialist; there is nothing more to be said about it.' 'Why is nothing more to be said?' said my servant. 'Then you do not believe in God and do not love Poland.' 'And why should I not believe in God and love Poland?' 'Because the socialists do not believe in God and do not love Poland.' And the locksmith replied, 'So? Then may sickness plague them.' That is the way people belong to the socialists. I do not say all, but a great many. Ha!"

And he began to laugh.

"The doctor always finds an anecdote," grumbled the notary; "but let us tell the truth, thousands belong to them."

"Then why do they not elect one deputy in the kingdom?" retorted the doctor. "Bombs explode loudly, so they can be heard better than any other work. But how many thousands participated in the national parade? Do these also belong to them? When in a factory ten men manage to hang a red flag on the chimney it seems that the whole factory is red, but that is not true."

"Why do not the others tear it down?"

"Simple reason! Because the police tear it down."

"And also because the socialists have revolvers and the others have not," added Gronski.

"Undoubtedly," continued the doctor. "I have ten times closer relations with the workingmen than any manager of a factory. I go into their dwellings and know their home life. I know them. Socialism is engaged in a struggle with the bureaucracy; so it seems to many that they belong to it. But, to the outrages only the worst and most ignorant element assents. The latter soon change into bandits, and that is not surprising. Their consciences have been taken away from them and revolvers are given to them. But the majority — the better and more honest majority — have under the ribs Polish hearts; and for that reason this demon, who wants to snatch and carry them away, called himself, as a bait, Polish. Ah! they only need schools, enlightenment, a knowledge of Polish history, in order not to allow themselves to be hoodwinked! Ay, that is what they need! Ay, ay!"

And in his gesticulations, he seized the old man's arm and began to turn him around.

"Schools, Pan Notary, schools; for the Lord's mercy!"

Blood rushed to the notary's head from indignation.

"Are you crazy!" he yelled. "Why do you jolt me like a pear?"

"True," said the doctor, leaving him alone. "True, but the extent to which these poor fellows misapprehend things is enough to cause one to weep and laugh at the same time."

"No, not to laugh," said Gronski.

"Do you know, sir, that at times, yes," exclaimed the doctor; "for listen to my second instance. Last Sunday, being tired as a dog, I drove out to the Gorczynski woods, just outside of the city, for a little airing. In the woods from the opposite direction came more than a dozen of workingmen who evidently were enjoying a May outing. I saw one of them carrying a red flag on a newly whittled

stick. He probably brought it in his pocket and fastened it when they got to the woods. 'Good!' I thought to myself, 'Socialists!' And now, when they were near, the one who carried the flag sang lustily to the tune of 'Bartoszu! Bartoszu!' that which I will repeat to you, and I pledge my word, I will not add or subtract anything.

'Kosciuszko, though a cobbler,
Oj, soundly thrashed the Germans,
Oj, soundly thrashed the Germans;
Only, it is a great pity
For us, that he drowned.
Only it is a great pity
For us, that he drowned.'"

"Ah, honest simplicity!" exclaimed Gronski. "I would embrace him and present him with a history of Poland of recent times."

"Wait, sir," shouted the doctor. "I stopped my socialists of strange rites. It appeared that almost all were known to me and I said: 'For the fear of God, citizens, Kosciuszko was not a cobbler, he never thrashed the Germans, and he did not drown, only Prince Joseph Poniatowski did. Come to me and I will give you a book about Kosciuszko, Kilinski,[1] and Prince Joseph Poniatowski, for you have made of them a bigos.[2] They began to thank me and then I asked: 'What has become of the eagle on your flag? did he go hunting for mushrooms?' They became confused. The flag-bearer started to explain why they had no eagle. 'Why, may it please the doctor,' he said, 'they told us: Do not take a flag with an eagle, for if they take the flag away from you, they will

[1] Kilinski was one of the bravest and most popular heroes who fought under Kosciuszko. He was a shoe-maker by trade. — TRANSLATOR.

[2] Bigos: a Polish dish of hashed meat and cabbage. — TRANSLATOR.

insult the eagle and you will suffer shame and disgrace.' Yes. In this manner they cheat the Polish heart of our own people."

But the notary did not want to part with his black spectacles.

"Well, what of it?" he asked. "Do you claim that if it was not for this and that there would not be any socialism amongst us?"

"There is socialism over the entire world," rejoined the doctor, "therefore there must be with us. Only if it was not for this and that, there would not accompany it highway robbery, savagery, and blindness; there would not be this modern socialism which has styled itself Polish, though its pitch can be smelt a mile away."

"Bravo!" cried Gronski. "I said the same thing in other words to another person on the road from Jastrzeb."

"Ay, Jastrzeb," said the doctor looking at his watch. "Here we are talking and it is time that we started."

"Perhaps the notary can go with us," said Gronski. "The carriage has seats for four."

"I can. Only I will take my flute with me. Well!" answered the notary.

"Well!" repeated Szremski, mimicking him. "Aha, the flute! Then there will be a serenade in Jastrzeb, while here the socialists will rob the office."

The notary who was going after his flute, suddenly turned around, sniffed vehemently, and said:

"To-day they sent me a sentence of death."

"Bah! I already have received two of them," merrily answered the doctor.

A quarter of an hour later they were on the road to Jastrzeb. On this occasion, Gronski and the doctor drew so closely to each other and talked so much, that, as Gronski said later, there was not a place in which to stick a pin.

XI

THE distance between the city and Jastrzeb was not more than a mile and a half. For this reason Gronski, the notary, and Szremski reached their destination before four o'clock. They were expected for dinner but in the meantime Ladislaus conducted the ladies over the saw-mill; so the doctor repaired to Pani Krzycki and Gronski ordered the saddle unpacked and taken to Marynia's room. In a half hour the young company returned and, greeting the notary, assembled in the salon to await the dinner. The notary at the sight of Marynia forgot all about death sentences, about the outrages perpetrated in the city, about socialism and the whole world and, after kissing her hand, appropriated her exclusively for himself. Gronski began to initiate Pani Otocka into the reasons of his trip to the city, while Krzycki conversed with Miss Anney and became as engrossed with her as if there were no one else in the room. It was apparent that his exclamation on that morning that "one could lose his head" was but a confirmation of a symptom which intensified more and more with each moment. His uncommonly handsome young face glowed as if from the dawn, for in his bosom he did have the dawn of a new, happy feeling, which beamed through the eyes, the smile on the lips, through every motion, and through the words he addressed to Miss Anney. The spell held him more and more; a secret magnet drew him with steadily increasing power to this light-haired maid, looking so young, buxom, and alluring. He did not even attempt to resist

that power. Gronski observed that he evinced his rapture too plainly and that in the presence of his mother he should have acted with more circumspection. Miss Anney also felt this, as from time to time blushes suffused her countenance and she pushed back her chair a little, besides glancing about at those present as if in fear that the excessive affability of the young host towards her might attract too much attention. But the matter, however, was agreeable to her, for in her eyes a certain joy flamed. Only Dolhanski gazed at her from time to time; the others were mutually occupied.

The appearance of the doctor ended the conversations. Krzycki, after introducing him to the ladies, together with them began to inquire about the health of the patient, but the doctor was evidently disinclined to speak at any length, for he answered in a few words and in accordance with his habit spoke so loudly that Dolhanski, in his surprise, placed the monocle on his eye.

"Nothing serious! Monsummano! Monsummano! or something like that! I will prescribe everything! Nothing serious! Nothing!"

"But what is Monsummano?" asked Ladislaus.

"That is a warm hole in Italy in which rheumatism is boiled out. A kind of purgatory after which salvation follows! Besides Italy, a delightful journey! I will prescribe everything in detail."

Gronski, who often had travelled over Italy, also knew this place and began to describe it to the curious ladies. In the meantime Ladislaus talked about his mother's health with the doctor, who, however, listened to him inattentively, repeating, "I will prescribe everything," shaking his head, and looking about him, as if with curiosity, at each of the ladies in rotation. Suddenly he slapped his hand on his knee with a thwack which could be heard all over the room and exclaimed:

"What marvellous faces there are in Jastrzeb and what skulls! Ha!"

Dolhanski dropped his monocle, the ladies looked amazed, but Krzycki began to laugh.

"The doctor has a habit of thinking aloud," he said.

"And bawling out yet more loudly," grumbled the notary.

"How is your flute?" the doctor replied, laughingly.

But at that moment the servant announced that dinner was ready. Hearing this, Pani Otocka turned with a peculiar smile to her sister and said:

"Marynia, your hair is all disheveled. Look at yourself in a glass."

The young lady raised her hands to her head, but as there were no mirrors in the salon, she, a little confused, said:

"Beg pardon, I will return immediately."

She hastened to her room, but soon returned still more confused with blushes and with a radiant countenance.

"A ladies' saddle!" she began to cry, "a most beautiful ladies' saddle!"

And passing her eyes over those present, she pointed at Gronski:

"Was it you?"

"I confess," said Gronski, spreading out his hands and bowing his head.

She, on her part, had such a desire to kiss his hand that if the doctor and the notary had not been present, she certainly would have done so. In the meanwhile she began to thank him with effusive and perfectly childish glee.

"I see, Panna Marynia, that you are fond of horseback riding," said Szremski.

"I am fond of everything."

"There you have it," cried the amused doctor.

"Only secure a gentle horse; otherwise it will not be hard to meet with accidents," observed the notary.

It soon became apparent that such a one could be procured, for on the economical Jastrzeb estate horses were the only item of which a strict account was not kept. Krzycki indeed maintained that they could be bred profitably, but he did not breed them for gain but from that traditional love of them, the immoderateness of which the reverend Skarga,[1] a few centuries before, censured in his ancestors in the eloquent words: "Dearer to you is the offspring of a mare than the Son of God!" Horses therefore were not wanting in Jastrzeb and the conversation about them and horsemanship continued, to the great dissatisfaction of the notary, throughout the whole dinner. Those present learned that Marynia was not entirely a novice, for at Zalesin, at her sister's, she rode in summer time almost daily in the company of the old manager on a clumsy, lanky pony, named Pierog. Her sister would not permit her to ride on any other horse and "what enjoyment could there be riding on Pierog?" She stated that this Pierog had a nasty habit of returning home, not when she wanted to, but when he desired to, and no urging nor threats could swerve him from his purpose when once formed. She also sincerely envied Miss Anney who rode so well and had ridden all the horses in Zalesin, even those unaccustomed to the saddle. But in England all the ladies ride on horseback, while with us somebody is worrying about somebody else. She hoped, however, that in Jastrzeb with so many skilled riders, "Zosia" will not have any fears about her; and that immediately after dinner they will go on an equestrian excursion and that she will be allowed to join the party, without, thank God, Pierog.

[1] Peter Skarga was the most famous pulpit orator in the history of Poland. — TRANSLATOR.

Ladislaus, in whom expectations of distant horseback jaunts in Miss Anney's company had excited fond hopes, and whom, as well as the others, the story about Pierog had put into good humor, turned to Marynia and said:

"I will give you a horse with iron legs, who is called 'Swimmer' because he can swim excellently. As for an excursion, the day is long and we could arrange one, if it were not that it is beginning to get cloudy."

"It will surely clear up," answered Marynia, "and I will dress myself right after dinner."

In fact, after dinner the guests were barely able to finish their black coffee before she appeared on the veranda, dressed in a black, tight-fitting riding-habit. In it she was simply charming, but so slender and tall that Gronski, gazing at her with his usual admiration, was the first to begin jesting:

"A real little flute," he said. "The wind will carry off such a woodcock, especially since it is commencing to blow."

And a strong blast of the western, warm wind really began to bend the tree-tops and drive here and there over the heavens clouds which on the azure background assumed large, ruddy, and globular forms.

Ladislaus, however, gave orders to saddle the horses and soon thereafter hastened to the stables to supervise the work. Miss Anney went upstairs to change her clothes; Gronski and Dolhanski followed her example. On the veranda remained only Pani Zosia, the doctor, the notary, and, attired as an equestrienne, Marynia, who cast uneasy glances alternately at the stables and at the sky, which was becoming more and more cloudy. After a time the first drops of rain began to fall and immediately thereafter a more important hindrance to their excursion occurred, for unexpectedly neighbors from Gorek, Pani Wlocek and daughter, the same who attended the funeral

of Zarnowski, arrived in a carriage. In view of this, the horseback jaunt had to be abandoned.

The Wlocek ladies came to ascertain the condition of Pani Krzycki's health and at the same time to beg Ladislaus for advice and succor, for in Gorek an agricultural strike had suddenly broke out among the manor and farmhouse laborers. The old coachman could hardly be induced to drive them to Jastrzeb for he was threatened with a beating. Both ladies were much frightened, much powdered, and more pathetic than ever. After the first greetings, mutual introductions, and a short talk about Pani Krzycki's rheumatism, the mother, at the after-dinner tea, addressed Ladislaus in doleful terms, adjuring him to hasten, like a knight of old, to the defence of oppressed innocence. She said that she was not concerned about herself, as after the losses she had survived and the suffering she had undergone, "the silent grave" in the Rzeslewo cemetery was the most appropriate refuge for her; but an orphan remained who still had some claims upon life. Let him extend some friendly protection and shield from blows and attacks this lone orphan for whom she herself was ready to sacrifice her life. To this the orphan replied that she too was not concerned about herself but about the peace of Mamma; — and in this manner the conversation changed almost exclusively in to a dialogue between these ladies in which the words, "Allow me, child," "Permit me, Mamma," were repeated every minute and in which the immoderate willingness of both parties to be immolated became in the end almost tart. Ladislaus, knowing these ladies of old, listened gravely; Pani Zosia looked at the bottom of her cup, not daring to glance at Marynia, who contracted the corners of her mouth; the notary sniffed and chewed; and the doctor ejaculated his "Ha!" with such resonance that the flies whisked off the net mantle which covered the butter and pastry.

But, in the meanwhile, out-of-doors the storm and thunder began to rage and interrupted the sacrificial dialogue between mother and daughter. The rooms darkened; on the windows for a time the patter of the shower was heard; and the lightning illuminated the cloudy firmament. But this lasted a brief while; after which Ladislaus began to reply and promise aid to the ladies, always with becoming gravity but at the same time with a peculiar kind of expression on his face which portended that the young wag had a surprise concealed in his bosom. He announced, therefore, that he was ready to mount a horse and invest Gorek with his care; afterwards he quieted the ladies with the assurances that the manifestations which had so alarmed them were transient; that in Rzeslewo, it was temporarily the same, but that undoubtedly within a short time means of foiling that evil would be found. In conclusion he turned to Pani Wlocek and, pointing at Dolhanski, unexpectedly said:

"I do not know whether my protection will be effective for I must watch at the same time over Rzeslewo and over Jastrzeb, in which at present we have such agreeable guests. But here is Pan Dolhanski, a man well known for his courage, energy, and sagacity, who has given me the best advice about Rzeslewo. If he wished to aid you or if he agreed to take into his hands the affairs of Gorek and Kwasnoborz, I am certain that he would establish order there in the course of a few days, and under his wings, ladies, no dangers could befall you."

All eyes, and particularly the eyes of the mother and daughter, were now directed at Dolhanski. But if Ladislaus, who wanted to revenge himself on him for his "officiousness," calculated that he would get him into an unexpected scrape, he was mistaken, for Dolhanski coolly bowed to the ladies from Gorek and replied, drawling each word as usual:

"With the greatest pleasure, but we must wait until the rain stops."

"Then, sir, you agree to be our knight?" cried Pani Wlocek, extending her hands towards him and at the same time gazing at him with a suddenly awakened curiosity and surprise.

"With the greatest pleasure," repeated Dolhanski; "the strike will be over to-morrow."

His complete self-assurance impressed everybody, particularly the ladies from Gorek. At the same time, the cold tone in which he spoke affected Pani Wlocek so much that for a while she lost her usual pathetic volubility and after an interval she replied:

"In the name of an orphan, I thank you."

But the orphan apparently preferred to thank him herself, for she stretched out both hands towards Dolhanski and after a brief silence, which might be explained by her emotions, spoke in a voice resembling the rustle of leaves:

"I am concerned about mamma."

"So am I," Dolhanski assured her.

But the mother and daughter now turned to each other:

"Allow me, child; here I am nothing."

"Permit me, Mamma; Mamma is everything."

"But I beg pardon, child—"

"Pardon me, Mamma,—"

And the strife about the burnt offerings began anew. It did not, however, last long, as, firstly, the doctor began to make so much noise that they could be heard with difficulty and then, Pani Krzycki, whom the young physician permitted to rise and move to an armchair, sent a message asking the ladies to visit her. After their departure the doctor went to the office to write out specifically where and how the cure should be conducted; the notary became occupied with his flute in the vestibule. Gronski, Dolhanski, and Ladislaus for a while remained alone.

Then Dolhanski addressed Ladislaus:

"What are these Gorek and Kwasnoborz?"

"About fifteen hundred acres, and there is also Zabianka."

"So I have heard. And the soil?"

"Almost the same as at Rzeslewo. In Zabianka it is said to be better."

"So I have heard. The state of the fortune?"

"Bad and good. Bad, because these ladies will not invest in anything. Good, because they have no debts and every penny which flows from the husbandry, after it gets into the stockings, never beholds daylight again."

"That is what I have been waiting for," said Dolhanski.

"They are as stingy as they are pathetic, and who knows whether they are not stingier?"

"Let them hoard."

And Gronski began to laugh and quoted:

"Sic vos non vobis nidificatis aves — sic vos non vobis mellificates apes — "

"Yes," said Dolhanski.

After which suddenly to Gronski:

"To-morrow I will propose for the hand of Cousin Otocka."

"To-day you are full of surprises," replied Gronski.

"Wait! And I will be given the mitten."

"Without any doubt."

"But I want to have a clear conscience. After which I will drive over to Gorek."

"That is already known. And you will quell the agitated waves of a strike."

"In the course of a day. As you see me here."

After which he pointed at Ladislaus.

"That simplex servus Dei became unwittingly an instrument in the hands of Providence. The Lord often

avails Himself of pigmies. For this, when you become bankrupt in Jastrzeb, apply to me at Gorek."

"Provided that before that time you are not reduced to the same level," responded Ladislaus, laughing. "You are an excellent leveller."

"We live in an age of universal levelling. But what is Panna Wlocek's Christian name?"

"Kajetana."

"Plait-il?"

"Kajetana," repeated Krzycki. "Her father's christian name was Kajetan and she was named in memory of him."

"Tell me then why that well-stocked Kajetana preserved herself in her virgin state until the age of thirty or more?"

"Thirty-five, to be accurate. That is what my mother said not long ago. She remembers the day of her birth. As to why she is unmarried the reason is plain. Parties were not wanting but those ladies looked too high. In the neighborhood, we only have the common nobility; and among the Krzyckis there was not a bachelor of suitable age. You, in this respect, would correspond to their fantasy — "

"That is well!" answered Dolhanski, "only that name! Kajetana! Kajetana! That seems to be a kind of carriage or boat! Do I know?"

Gronski and Ladislaus regarded Dolhanski's announcement as a joke, as one of the sallies of wit which often crossed his mind. He, however, kept his word, for on the following day he proposed to Pani Otocka with due gravity and, after receiving an equally grave refusal, rode off to Gorek and settled there for a time. The young ladies, and even Pani Krzycki, were greatly amused and interested in all this, especially when the news reached them that the agrarian strike in Gorek ended the same day on which

Dolhański appeared. And it also ended a few days later in Rzeslewo, partly from the force of circumstances, from the conviction innate in the peasant soul that the "holy land" is not to be trifled with, and partly owing to the news which spread over the village that somebody from some kind of a committee was to come and decide the whole matter. Such was the case with the manor servants. The peasants and husbandmen did not want to agree to any school and would not relinquish the possession of the manor lands, but awaited this somebody in equal fear and hope, sacredly believing that not the will nor the law but some unknown power would decide everything. In the villages, in the meantime, more peaceful days ensued, and though the daily papers brought intelligence of increased commotion in the cities, Ladislaus believed that the local storm had passed away. This belief was shared by the guests. As the doctor had announced that Pani Krzycki's departure depended upon the first signs of alleviation of her suffering, Ladislaus determined to take the best advantage he could of the brief time the young ladies were to remain in Jastrzeb. The horseback excursions began and unless prevented by rain took place every morning. They were particularly agreeable to Ladislaus because Gronski, riding leisurely, kept company with his "adoration," while he could pass hours alone with Miss Anney. Both were expert riders; they usually dashed ahead and most frequently disappeared from view in the distance. At times, they set off at full gallop, and intoxicated themselves with the mad speed, the air, the sun, and each other. At other times they rode abreast, slowly, stirrup to stirrup, and then the silence into which they fell, anxious, full of inexpressible delight, linked them with ties yet stronger than those with which their conversation bound them. With a glance Krzycki scanned the figure of the golden-haired maiden, resembling on horseback the divine Gre-

cian forms or those on Etruscan vases, and feasted his eyes. He listened to her voice and it seemed to him that it was music still nearer perfection than that which poured forth from Marynia's violin. At times when he assisted her to mount her horse, he had to exert the full strength of his will to refrain from pressing her foot to his lips and forehead. And often he thought that if he ever dared to do so, he would desire to remain in that position as long as possible. To this feminine being all his thoughts were impelled, and through the might and flight of his feeling, his desires ceased to be like crawling serpents and became like winged birds, capable of soaring unto heaven. His love each day became more like a whirlpool which drags to itself and engulfs everything. It seemed to Ladislaus that the air, the sun, the fields, the forests, the meadows, the scent of the trees and flowers, the song of birds and the evening playing of Marynia, — all these were only some of the elements of that love which belonged to Miss Anney and entered into her being and, without her, would be insignificant and without essence. Moreover, the whirlpool seized him and plunged him more and more deeply with a power to which each day he offered less resistance, for the simple reason that the abyss appeared to him to be the abyss of happiness. Ladislaus now did not surrender her to any Englishman "with protruding jaw" or any Scot "with bare knees," and would not have given her up for the whole of England and Scotland. He ceased trying to persuade himself that this was a type of woman, which he might have loved and, instead, he confessed to himself sincerely that she was a woman whom he did love. Love generated in him a bright and determined will; so now he thought, with the strict logic of feeling, that he craved to win this, to him, most precious and most desired being, to take and retain her for his whole life. There was only one road leading to that: therefore

he determined to enter upon it with that heedless willingness which a man, who desires to be happy, evinces. Sometimes also a confession quivered upon his lips. He restrained it however and deferred it from day to day, at first owing to a timidity which every enamoured heart feels, and again through calculation. For if Love is blind, it certainly is not so to whatever may bring it benefits. It can even weigh benefits and obstacles upon such delicate scales that in this regard it is perhaps the most cautious, the most prescient, and the shrewdest of human feelings. In fact Ladislaus observed that his mother and Miss Anney were bound by a sympathy which, on the part of youth, health, and strength was productive of a certain friendly care, and on the part of weakness and old age, of gratitude. All three ladies were solicitous about his mother, but neither the solicitude of Pani Otocka, nor that of Marynia, was so vigilant or so efficacious as the watchfulness of Miss Anney. Pani Krzycki candidly said that even Ladislaus could not move from room to room with such dexterity the armchair to which temporary disability had riveted her; that he could not anticipate and humor her wants as could this light-haired "good English diviner."

To Krzycki, it frequently occurred that certainly this "good diviner" did all that through kindness and sincere friendship, but also because she wanted to conciliate his mother. And his heart trembled with joy at the thought that the moment would arrive when the wishes of his mother would coincide with that for which he, himself, most strongly yearned. He feared that a premature avowal might sever the ties which were being formed and for that reason he checked the word, which often burned his lips like a flame.

After all, there was an avowal in their silence and glances. Ladislaus did not dare and, until that time, did

not wish to tell her plainly that he loved her; he wanted, however, with each word to clear the path and approach that eagerly desired moment. In the meantime it happened that, either from lack of breath he could not speak at all, or else he said something entirely different from what he intended to say. Once when they rode amidst luxuriant winter corn and when a light breeze bent towards them the rye stalks, together with the red poppy and the gray fescue-grass, he decided to tell her that all Jastrzeb bowed at her feet; and he said, with a great beating of his heart, in a hollow voice not his own, "that in places the grain is lying down." After which, in his soul, he called himself an idiot and fretted at the supposition that a similar opinion of him must have crossed her mind. It seemed to him that she, beyond comparison, exercised a better self-control and that she could always say just what she wished to say. Consequently, even at times when partly through coquetry and partly because of her habit of repeating his expressions like an echo, she answered, for instance, "that in places the grain is lying down," he discerned in her words an unheard-of significance and later pondered over them for hours.

But he also had, particularly in the morning, moments of greater tranquillity of mind and greater peace, in which his words were not like a disarrayed rank of soldiers, each one marching in a different direction. At times, the themes for these quieter conversations were furnished by some external objects, but oftener by anxiety occasioned by the impending separation. Krzycki at such times hid behind his mother and in her name expressed that which he did not dare to say in his own.

"I can imagine," he said the day following the second visit of the doctor, "how Mother will long for you."

And the maiden, to whom it evidently occurred that not only the mother but the son would long for her, looked

at him a little teasingly, with the hazy light of her strange eyes, and replied:

"I am such a bird of flight that your mother will soon become disaccustomed to me."

"Oh, I warrant you that she will not," exclaimed Ladislaus.

After which, he added:

"I know Mother; she has fallen in love with you immensely."

"Why, hardly ten days have elapsed since we arrived. Is it possible to fall in love so soon?"

To this Ladislaus replied with deep conviction:

"It is! I give you my word, it is!"

There was something so naive in the manner and tone of the reply that Miss Anney could not refrain from laughing. But he observed this and began to speak rapidly as if he wished to explain and justify himself:

"For do we know whence love comes? Often at the first glance of the eye upon a human face we have such an impression as if we found some one whom we were seeking. There are certain unalterable forces which mutually attract people, although before that time they may have never met and though they had lived far away from each other."

"And must such persons always meet each other?"

"No," he answered, "I think not always. But then perhaps they are continually yearning, not knowing for what, and feel an eternal vacuity in life."

And here, in spite of his will, the sincere poetry of youth and sentiment spoke through his lips:

"You called yourself a bird of flight," he said. "Beloved also is that bird, only not as a bird which flies away but rather as a bird which flies hitherward. For it flies unexpectedly from somewhere in the distance — from beyond the mountains, from beyond the sea, and nests in

the heart, and begins to sing such a song that one hearing it would fain close his eyes and never waken again."

And thus he spoke until he grew pale from emotion. For a time he was agitated, like a whirlwind, by the desire to dismount from his horse and embrace the feet of the maiden with his arms and cry: "Thou art that beloved one: therefore do not fly away, my dear bird!" But simultaneously he was seized by a prodigious fear of that night which would encompass him if his entreaty should prove futile.

So he merely uncovered his head, as if he wanted to display his heated forehead. A long silence, which fell between them, was only interrupted by the snorting of the horses, which now proceeded in an ambling pace, emitting under the bridles a white foam.

After which Miss Anney spoke in a subdued voice which sounded a little like a warning:

"I hear Pan Gronski approaching with Marynia."

In fact the other couple soon approached, happy and animated. Marynia, a few paces away, exclaimed:

"Pan Gronski was telling me such beautiful things about Rome. I am sorry that you did not hear them."

"More about the neighborhood of Rome, than Rome itself," said Gronski.

"Yes. I was in Tivoli. I was in Castel Gandolfo, in Nemi. Wonders! I will tease Zosia until in truth we will go there and Pan Gronski with us."

"Will you take me along?" asked Miss Anney.

"Of course! We will all go in the autumn or next spring. Did you folks also talk about a trip?"

For a time there was no response.

"No," Miss Anney finally replied. "We were talking about birds of flight."

"Why, now it is spring and birds do not fly away."

"Nevertheless, you ladies are making preparations for flying away," answered Ladislaus with a sigh.

"True," rejoined Marynia; "but that is because Aunt is going away; and she" — here she pointed at Miss Anney with her riding whip — "has urged us all three to go where the doctor is sending Aunt."

After which she said to Ladislaus:

"You would not believe, sir, how honest she is and how she loves Aunt."

"I, not believe? I?" cried Ladislaus with ardor.

But Miss Anney, who a short time before had asked him whether one could fall in love so soon, became greatly confused and, dropping the reins, began with both hands to set something right on her hat, wishing to cover with them her countenance which glowed like the dawn.

Ladislaus had heaven in his heart, and Marynia, for some time, gazed with her pellucid eyes, now at him and then at Miss Anney, for it was no secret to her that Krzycki was in love up to his ears, and this aroused her curiosity and amused her indescribably.

XII

"SEE what I received to-day," said Ladislaus, handing Gronski a letter which came with others in the morning mail.

Gronski glanced at it and knit his brow.

"Ah!" he said, "a death sentence."

"Yes."

"With the seal of the P. P. S. They are distributing them quite prodigally."

"Yes, just like the opposite party."

"Both are alike. The notary also has one and the doctor several. What do you think of it?"

"Je m'en fiche! But the situation amuses me. I do not know whether you have heard that the Provincial guards have unearthed a secret school in Jastrzeb, which I founded a year ago because my conscience commanded me to. It is a case which I greased but have not yet greased sufficiently. As a result, I now have suspended over me the fists of the authorities and the fists of the socialists. Enjoyable, is it not?"

"It has often occurred to me that elsewhere people could not live under such conditions, and we not only live but laugh quite merrily."

"For such is our sinewy Lechite nature."

"Perhaps that is so. You must, nevertheless, be on your guard and it will be necessary to send the ladies away."

"It will be necessary, it will be necessary," repeated Ladislaus. "And abroad too, for it is unsafe in Warsaw. But please do not say anything about this foolish sentence to Mother or any one else."

"Certainly."

"Mother positively insists upon my accompanying her, and I do not try to shun that — oh, no, not in the least! But summer is approaching and after that there will be the harvest. The overseer is an honest man but before my departure I must give him some specific instructions how and what he is to do. After they all leave, I would like to stay yet for a week or ten days. Mother will not be alone and without care, as in the first place the younger members of the family will be with her, and again you heard Cousin Marynia say that the ladies will go wherever Mother would be. Through all my life I will ever be grateful to Miss Anney for that proposal; for to Mother nothing could be better or more agreeable."

"And for her son also, it seems to me," said Gronski, laughing.

Ladislaus remained silent for a time; after which he began to press the palms of his hands on his temples and replied:

"Yes. For why should I deny that which I confessed to myself and which everybody sees but Mother, who has not observed it because she seldom saw us together. But she also has fallen in love with Miss Anney. Who would not love her? Such a dear, golden creature. I have not, as yet, said anything to Mother because she has her mind set upon Pani Otocka and it will be unpleasant for her to give up the thought. I fear she might be offended. After all, I only know what is taking place within me, and nothing more. I dare not even say that I have any reasons for my illusion. I fear that it may all at once burst like a soap-bubble. Ah! How unhappy I would be. Already I cannot see anything in this world beyond her. Candidly speaking, I do not know what to do with myself, Jastrzeb, and life."

And grasping Gronski's hand, he continued:

"If you would only speak with Pani Otocka and ascertain from her whether I may have hope; for they are friends and certainly do not keep any secrets from each other. If you would only do this for me; and in due time speak with Mother! But with Pani Otocka as soon as possible! Will you do it?"

"I have spoken with Pani Otocka about that," replied Gronski, "but what, do you suppose, she answered? That she could not tell me anything as Miss Anney confided to her a certain personal secret which she was not at liberty to divulge. I admit that this surprised me. In reality, the secret cannot be anything derogatory to Miss Anney, as otherwise Pani Otocka would not be on such cordial and intimate terms with her. They are like sisters, and in Warsaw they lived together, almost door to door. After all, Pani Otocka, it seemed to me, was sincerely in your favor and, at times, I received the impression that she was concerned in having matters come to the pass which they have. As for Marynia, she wriggles her little ears and with that it ends. In any case, be assured that you have not enemies in those ladies and, if you want to know my personal views, much less in Miss Anney."

"Would to God! Would to God!" answered Ladislaus. "You have given me a little encouragement and I breathe more easily."

"But you, I see, have fallen unto your ears," observed Gronski.

"I give you my word that I prefer one of her fingers or the ray of her hair to all the women in the world. I never had a conception that one could thus surrender himself. At times I do not know what is happening to me or what will occur, for only think: I have Jastrzeb, the estate, the Rzeslewo affairs, Mother's departure, and here I cannot think of anything but her — but her — and to nothing

else can I apply my mind. I regret every moment in which I do not gaze upon her. To-day, for instance, I received a summons from the Directory to come in reference to the will and Rzeslewo, and I postpone the matter until to-morrow. I cannot — plainly — I cannot! I would go at night were it not that the Directory is closed for the night."

"Remember, however, the death sentence."

"May the devil take them with their sentence, or let them finally shoot me in the head. I would still be thinking of her, especially after what you have told me. But how do you know that Pani Otocka is in my favor? Those are honest, golden hearts, both of those cousins! How did you say it? That they are not my enemies? Thank God, even for that! For, why should they hate me? But please speak with Pani Otocka again. I am not concerned about her betraying any secret but only that, knowing Miss Anney, she should say something one way or the other — you know what I want — certainty — even though a morsel —"

"Certainly," said Gronski, laughing, "I will seek an opportunity to-day."

"Thank you! Thank you!"

In fact an opportunity was easily found, as Pani Otocka also had some news which she desired to impart to Gronski, and with this object she sent her maid to him with an invitation to meet her on the yoked elm walk, near the pond. When they met there she gave him, just as Ladislaus had done a while before, a letter which arrived in the same morning's mail and said:

"Please read it and advise me what to do with it."

It was a letter from Laskowicz to Marynia and its tenor was as follows:

"A great idea is like a gigantic bird: her wings cast a shadow over the earth, while she hovers in the sun.

"Whoever does not fly upwards with her is surrounded by darkness.

"And darkness is death.

"In that darkness, I behold Thee, like an alabaster statuette. This night the sounds of thy music reach me.

"And lo, in my lonely chamber I think of Thee and grieve for Thee.

"For Thou couldst be a beam-feather in the wings of this gigantic bird idea and inhale the pure air of the dizzy heights and play in glory to the legions of the living; and Thou breathest the air of tombs and playest to a life which is moribund and to souls that wither; and not to people but to ghosts.

"I grieve for Thee, my silvery one.

"And my thoughts fly to Thee like eagles.

"For heretofore there was imbedded in my strength a part of human happiness but there was not in it my own happiness.

"Now Thou suddenly glidest before my eyes like a light, and through my ears like music, and hast filled my bosom with a yearning for things I had not known before, and hast filled me with Thine own indispensable quintessence and a consciousness of my happiness.

"Therefore I loved Thee the same night when I beheld Thee and heard Thee for the first time.

"Henceforth, though Thou are not near me, I am with Thee and will follow wherever Thou wilt be.

"For Thou art necessary to my existence and I am to Thee, in order to resuscitate Thee.

"In order to snatch Thee from destruction; from amidst those who are about to die.

"In order to surrender Thee to the great idea, and the exalted, and the light, and the living hosts who suffer from a dearth of bread and music.

"Thee and Thy music.

"May extermination not fall upon you both.
"Oh, beloved one.

"A certain night I summoned Thee but Thou didst not hear me and didst not come. Now I extend my hands towards Thee and say unto Thee: Come and slumber in my heart.

"And when the time of awakening comes, I will wake Thee for a brief moment of pleasure, which love gives for the toil without an end and which the idea demands.

"For toil and perchance for martyrdom.

"But in that martyrdom for the dawn of a new life, there is greater happiness than in the dusk, mephitic air, ashes and mould of graves.

"Therefore come even for martyrdom.

"And until our existence floats into the sea of nothingness, abide with me.

"Oh, beloved one."

Gronski's countenance reflected perturbation. For a time he and Pani Otocka walked in silence.

"What shall I do with this, and what does it mean?"

"This is a disagreeable and vexatious matter, and the letter means that Laskowicz, who never in his life saw a being like Marynia, has fallen in love with her from the first acquaintance, as he himself says. I observed that after a few days and if I did not say anything to you about it, it was because Laskowicz was soon to leave. But he has fallen in love with his head and not his heart, for otherwise, instead of high-flown expressions, borrowed, as it were, from some school of literature, he would have found simpler and more sincere words. His exaltation may be sincere, it may waste and destroy him like a fever; it may last for whole years, but its chief source is the head and not the heart."

But Pani Otocka, who at the moment was not in the least interested in an analysis of Laskowicz's feelings, interrupted a further disquisition:

"But what are we to do, in view of this? How are we to act? It is about Marynia that I am concerned."

"You are right," answered Gronski. "Pardon my untimely reflections, but it is always better to know with whom and with what one has to do. My opinion is that it would be best not to do anything, just as if this letter had not arrived. You may return it to Laskowicz, but that would be exceedingly contemptuous: this letter deserves, perhaps, to be thrown into a fireplace, but in my opinion it does not merit contempt. It is, if you will permit me to thus express myself, nervous and insolent, but it preserves a certain measure in its expressions and there is nothing brutal in it. Besides it expresses rather the thoughts which came to Laskowicz's mind than any actual hopes, and to that extent it might be explained to Marynia that this is not a letter to her but a poem for her, not quite felicitously conceived. And Marynia? What impression did it make upon her and what does she say?"

"Marynia," answered Pani Otocka with a certain comic uneasiness, "is a little offended, a little worried and frightened, but in the innermost recesses of her heart, she is a little proud that somebody should have written such a letter to her."

"Oh, I was certain of that," exclaimed Gronski, laughing involuntarily.

After a while he began to speak seriously.

"No doubt other letters will come and as these may be more glaring, we will have to persuade the little one that she should not read them. If you will permit, I will undertake that, after which, you ladies ought to go to Warsaw, and; in a short time, journey abroad and the matter will end of itself."

"To tell the truth," responded Pani Otocka, "I want to leave Jastrzeb as soon as possible. We are not necessary for Aunt but are rather a hindrance in the preparations for her departure, and I confess that I am possessed by fear. Please read that letter again carefully. Why, there are threats there against all the residents of Jastrzeb and even against Marynia if she stays with us."

Gronski thought of Ladislaus receiving at the same time a death sentence, and in the first moments it occurred to him that it might have some connection with Laskowicz's letter. But after a while he recollected that similar sentences were sent to the doctor and even the aged notary: therefore to pacify Pani Otocka, he said:

"These are times of continual menaces and everybody receives them, but I do not think that Laskowicz intended to warn Marynia of any imminent attack threatening us in Jastrzeb. He undoubtedly wished to say that the waves of socialism will sweep away all who do not float with it, and therefore us. But as the peace of yourself and Marynia is involved, as to leaving, why of course! Why should we not leave even to-morrow?"

"I already thought of that, but Aunt urged us to wait for her and Aninka promised her that."

"Then let her remain, and you ladies leave. Ah, so Miss Anney delays the departure? Good news for Laudie! May I tell him that? A while ago, he begged me to learn something from you, — for the poor fellow barely lives. He is the most love-sick swain within the boundaries of the Commonwealth."

"So it has gone as far as that?"

"It has! Evidently there is something inflammatory in the atmosphere of Jastrzeb. Here everybody falls in love, either openly or in secret."

Hearing this, Pani Otocka unexpectedly blushed like a fifteen-year-old girl, and though this happened often and

upon the most trivial provocation, Gronski being unable to surmise what had passed through her mind, looked at her with a certain wonder.

"How then?" he said. "There are Laudie, Laskowicz, and Dolhanski. But Dolhanski has the most energy, for, after his latest repulse, he immediately decamps upon a new expedition, while Laudie fears."

"What?" asked Pani Otocka, raising her eyes.

"First, a repulse from which he thinks he could not recover, and, again, a discussion with his mother which awaits him."

"Perhaps something else awaits Cousin Laudie, but he need not fear about Aninka."

"He will die from joy when I tell him that, but in my way, I, who am known to you as a meddler, could die from curiosity."

"What of it, when I have no right to speak about it?"

"Not even when we leave Jastrzeb?"

"Not even then. After all, everything will soon clear up."

"In such case, I have procured enough for the nonce, and in the meanwhile I will return to Laudie to tell him the good news and apprise him of our departure. I will not mention anything about Laskowicz's letter, for to-morrow he will set off for the city and, if they met, a nasty encounter might result."

XIII

LADISLAUS, however, did not go to the city on the day following his conversation with Gronski, for he was notified that the meeting of the executors of Zarnowski's will was postponed for one week. The reason for this was that in two days a convention of the citizens of the vicinity was to commence in reference to providing insurance for the superannuated rural officials and manor-servants, and also in regard to the more burning question of introducing the Polish language into the communes, — a question in which the communal justices as well as the villagers were interested. Ladislaus determined, by all means, to participate in these debates, but as they were to take place in the forenoons, he formulated a plan of going to them every morning and returning home in the afternoon. In view of the proximity of Jastrzeb to the city, this plan was quite feasible.

However, he was disappointed in the hope that he could devote those two days exclusively to the guests, or rather to the most precious of guests in Jastrzeb, as the disorders in Rzeslewo broke out with renewed virulence and they required almost all his time. The strike of the manor help, indeed, ceased so completely that the intervention, which Dolhanski advised, became superfluous and it was necessary to restrain it. But in the meantime individual tenants and some of the husbandmen began to commit depredations in the forest. Ladislaus, at the head of the local and Jastrzeb foresters, sought these disorderly persons, who, indeed, hid at the sight of him: nevertheless they assumed a very threatening attitude towards the servants, promising to all swift vengeance. The foresters

received bulky letters, assuring them "that they would get a bullet in the head, and the heir also would." But the heir, who was not wanting in youthful energy and was not averse to adventure, did not at all neglect the defence of the Rzeslewo forests, and, what was more, he personally rushed over to Rzeslewo and summoning the malefactors, declared that he would invoke courts and punishment.

And afterwards, he repaired at the designated time to the conference. It was to be the last day of the sojourn in Jastrzeb of Pani Octoka, Marynia, and Gronski, who decided to leave on the following day for Warsaw. Miss Anney, at Pani Krzycki's solicitation, agreed to remain for a few days, and leave with her. Ladislaus announced that he would return as soon as possible in order to spend the evening with all of them and to listen for the last time to Marynia's bewitching violin. He also said that he would induce the notary and the doctor to come with him.

As a result, they waited dinner for them. In the meantime, about four o'clock, Gronski sat in his room writing a letter to Dolhanski, Marynia, upstairs, played her daily exercises, Pani Otocka sat with the patient, and Miss Anney went out on the balcony, ostensibly to photograph the old and lofty trees which enclosed the courtyard on two sides, but in reality to see whether he, whom they expected at home, was returning. So instead of photographing, she began to lose her sight and soul in the shady depths of the old linden roadway. Hope that soon she would behold in that depth a cloud of dust, horses, and carriages, and that afterwards the lively form of a youth would leap out, filled her with a quiet joy. Lo, after a while she would see before her that countenance, stately, sympathetic, and sincere; those eyes, whose every glance spoke to her a hundred times more than the lips, and would hear that voice which penetrated to her heart and thrilled it like music. At this thought, Miss Anney was encom-

passed with such sweet, calm feeling, as if she were a child and as if some loved hand were lightly rocking her to sleep; as if she were resting in a boat, which the gentle waves bore somewhere into a distance, unknown, but radiant. To permit herself to be rocked, to allow herself to be borne, to confide in the waves, to not think, for the time being, of where the boat will stop, — this was all that the heart of the maiden, at such moments, desired. But at other moments, when she propounded to herself the question, "What will happen further?" she looked with faith into the future. Sometimes when sleep refused to close her eyes, there flitted through her mind, like dark butterflies, uncertainties and fears, but even then she said to herself that the heaven may become cloudy in the future, but at present she was enjoying charming, fair weather, and every day was like a flower, and she plucked those flowers, one after another and laid them upon her bosom. So she thought that for this it was worth while to live and even to die.

And at that moment, though her soul was dissolving in the sun, in the serene atmosphere, in the rustle of leaves and in the great pastoral calm, flooded with light, she had no desire to die, for it seemed to her that, with the air, she inhaled joyful appeasement. Everything about her began to lose the mark of reality and change into an azure vision of happiness, half dreamy, half wakeful. From this revery she was aroused by the sight, awaiting which she had sat for almost an hour on the balcony. Lo, at the uttermost end of the roadway her eagerly desired cloud of dust appeared and it approached with unusual rapidity. Miss Anney recollected herself. In the first moments she wanted to retire. "It is necessary, it is necessary," she said to herself, "otherwise he will be apt to think that I was waiting for him." And she would have been sincerely indignant had any one suggested to her that such was the case. But suddenly her knees became so weak that she

sat again, clutching the camera in order that it might appear that when found on the balcony she was taking photographs. In the meantime the cloud drew nearer the gates of entry, continuing with the same speed. Soon in harmony with the picture which the maiden had previously formed, the gray heads of the fore horses emerged from the dust. Like lightning, an impression of joy shook Miss Anney. "How he is flying and how anxious he is!" But immediately afterwards, as she began to wonder at the amazing speed, she thought that the horses were frightened. They were already so close to the gates that she could perceive the wind-tossed manes, the distended bloody nostrils and the frantic motions of the horses' feet. Suddenly she rose and her eyes reflected horror, for she observed that the coachman sat, bent so that only the top of his head could be seen — without a cap. In the meantime the intractable horses dashed through the gate; at the winding, the coachman fell off and the carriage with slightly diminished speed swung in a semi-circle along the border of the flower-bed. In the carriage, on the rear seat, Ladislaus sat alone, with his head tilted upwards and propped upon a carriage cushion. A cry of terror escaped from Miss Anney's breast. The horses, in the twinkle of an eye, reached the balcony and being accustomed to stop before it, implanted their hoofs in the ground. Ladislaus moved and, pale as a corpse, with blood streaming over his collar and coat sleeves, staggered from the carriage; when the maiden hurried towards him, he cried, grasping the air with his mouth:

"Nothing! . . . I am wounded, but it is nothing!"

And he toppled to the ground at her feet.

And she, in a moment raised him with a strength, amazing in a woman, and supporting him with her arms and breast, began to shriek:

"Save him! Help! Help!"

PART SECOND

I

When Miss Anney raised the wounded young man, the household servants were in the other part of the house. Nearest to her — for they were in the vestibule playing billiards — were Pani Zosia and Marynia. These ladies rushed upon the balcony and, seeing Miss Anney supporting the disabled youth, emulating her example, began to shout at the top of their voices. She, in the meantime, placed him upon a bench on the balcony and enclosing him in her arms, called for water. Both sisters hurried to the sideboard for it and alarmed the whole house. Gronski and everything living collected there. In the first moments Gronski lost his head and when he recovered his senses he sent Pani Otocka to Ladislaus' mother to apprise her of the occurrence. In the meanwhile Miss Anney ordered the servants to carry the wounded man. She, herself, was compelled for a while to attend to her maid, who at the sight of Ladislaus, began to scream and then fell into hysterical convulsions. Gronski hastened to the stable to dispatch horses for the doctor.

But before the wounded man was borne to his room his mother came precipitately. At the news of the misfortune, she forgot about her rheumatism and assisted in the removal of her son, and in undressing and laying him in bed. Afterwards she began to wash out the wounds with a sponge. Ladislaus, owing to a copious flow of blood, fell into a long faint, and, after regaining consciousness for a brief interval, fainted again: in consequence of which he

could not give any information about the ocurrence. He only repeated several times, "In the woods, in the woods!" From which they could infer that the attack took place, not upon the public highway but on the borders of Rzeslewo or Jastrzeb.

In the meantime, the rattle of a britzka resounded before the balcony and, a moment later, Gronski summoned Miss Anney from her room, where she was hastily changing her clothes, which were covered with blood.

"I am riding alone," he said. "The coachman is on the sick list and the housekeeper has taken charge of him. None of the grooms want to go. All are scared and positively refuse. Only the old lackey is willing to drive, but I think that he cannot drive any better than I can."

"It is imperatively necessary to drive for the doctor at once," answered Miss Anney, pressing the palms of her hands to her burning cheeks, "but it is also necessary to prepare for the defence of the house. Please hurry to the farmers' quarters and send for the forest rangers to come with their arms. Otherwise those men will be apt to break in here and administer the finishing blow to him."

"That is true."

And she continued hurriedly:

"It is necessary to send some one for the men in the sawmill and arm them with firearms. The field hands will follow their example. In all probability an assault will be made upon the manor-house and here are only women. You must assume charge of the defence. Please go at once, and do send for the forest rangers."

Gronski admitted the propriety of the advice, and proceeded immediately to the farmers' buildings. It was within the range of possibility that the assailants, not knowing the result of their shooting, might wish to ascertain and perhaps finish their work. This had happened in several instances, and in view of this, all,

and, more particularly, the women, were concerned. Gronski was not an energetic man, but no coward, and the thought of the being most precious to him in the world, Marynia, infused him with energy. He immediately sent the field hands for the forest rangers, as well as to the sawmill, where a dozen or more men worked, of whom it was known in the manor, as well as in the village, that they read "The Pole" and did not fear any one. The manor domestics very quickly recovered from their consternation. The reason for this was that the wounded coachman, though he did not see the assailants who had fired from thickets, claimed with great positiveness that "the Rzeslewo people attacked the young heir" on account of disputes about the forest. This removed from the affair the awe of mystery; and a peasant does not fear danger but mystery. Besides, as there existed between the men of Jastrzeb and the men of Rzeslewo an ancient grudge, dating from the time of the wrangle about bounding the stream, as soon as the news of the attempt of the Rzeslewo men spread over the village, those of Jastrzeb ceased not only to fear, but a desire for revenge was bred in them. The manor servants began to feel ashamed now that they had refused to drive for the doctor. Others, hearing that Rzeslewo wished to make an onslaught on Jastrzeb manor, seized pitchforks and pulled out pickets from the fences. Gronski, aware of the death sentence received by Ladislaus, viewed the matter differently, but kept his opinion to himself, understanding that a peasant, though he often suddenly displays unusual terror, when once he starts to pull out pickets from fences, does not fear anybody whatsoever.

Therefore delighted with this turn of affairs, he took with him a stout groom, who undertook to convey him to the city. But here a surprise awaited him, for before the balcony there was not a trace of the britzka and on the balcony stood the old lackey Andrew, with dejected face,

and Marynia, pale, terror-stricken, with tears in her eyes, and who seeing him began to cry:

"How could you, sir, permit her to ride alone? How could you do it?"

"Miss Anney drove alone to the city!" exclaimed Gronski.

And his countenance reflected such amazement that it was easy to perceive that it had happened without his knowledge or consent.

"My God!" he said, "she sent me to the farmhouses to arrange the defence, and it never occurred to me that in the meantime she would jump into the britzka and drive away. It never occurred to me for a moment."

But Marynia did not stop her lamentations.

"They will kill her in the woods; they will kill her," she repeated, wringing her hands.

Gronski, in order to quiet her, assured her that he would send out succor at once, but returning to the farmhouses, he began to reason that if he, himself, set out after her on horseback he would accomplish nothing and would leave the house without a masculine head, and if he should send the field laborers, before they reached the forest Miss Anney would outstrip them. It was possible for them to insure, fairly well, her safe return, but to insure her safe passage through the woods in the direction of the city it was absolutely too late.

This was likewise acknowledged by Dolhanski, who not knowing of anything, returned by chance a half an hour later from Gorek to Jastrzeb. Hearing of the occurrence and Miss Anney's expedition, he could not refrain from exclaiming:

"But that is a brave girl. I wish I was Krzycki."

After which, going with Gronski to see the injured man, he added:

"We will have to go out to meet her. I will attend to that."

Ladislaus was already completely conscious and wanted to rise. He did not do so on account of his mother's entreaties and adjurations. His two friends did not tell him who had gone after the doctor. They only informed him that the doctor would arrive without delay and, after a short while, left, having something else to attend to. Dolhanski now assumed command over the improvised garrison which was to defend the manor-house. Gronski did not expect to find in him such an extraordinary supply of energy, sangfroid and self-confidence. He soon imparted this feeling to the household servants and the foresters; and the organization of the defence was not difficult. Two Jastrzeb forest rangers and one from Rzeslewo, who came later, had their own firearms, and in the manor-house were found Ladislaus' six fowling-pieces and, of these, two were short rifles. Dolhanski distributed this entire arsenal among men who knew how to use the weapons. A few servants from the village, who had participated in the Japanese war, appeared. Under these circumstances there was no fear of a sudden and unexpected attack. The workingmen from the sawmill, being of the Nationalistic persuasion, were anxious "that something should happen," so that they could "show how the teeth of uninvited guests are cleaned."

Having arranged everything in this manner, Dolhanski intrusted the defence of the manor-house and the women to Gronski. Before that, however, he calmed them as to Miss Anney with the assurance that he returned from Gorek through the selfsame forest and rode in safety. This was the actual fact. But what was stranger, he did not meet the Englishwoman, from which they inferred that the courageous but prudent young lady evidently drove on another side road. However, as the distance to the city was not great and her return might be expected soon, he proceeded to meet her, taking along with him

two forest rangers armed from head to foot. Gronski again was compelled to admire the shrewdness and ingenuity with which he issued in the name of the "Central Government" a command to the peasants of the village, that they should, in case they heard shots in the forest, rush in a body to their aid. The peasants did not know what this "Central Government" was. Neither did Dolhanski. He only knew that the name alone would create an impression, and the supposition that it was some Polish authority would ensure it a willing obedience.

But these were superfluous precautions, as it appeared that there was no one in the Jastrzeb and Rzeslewo forests which extended along the other side of the road. The miscreants who fired at Krzycki had decamped with due haste, evidently from fear of pursuit; or else they awaited the night, concealed in some distant underwood belonging to other villages. One of the forest rangers, who had previously fully questioned the coachman about the place of the ambush, found, while beating the adjacent thickets, empty revolver cartridge shells, in consequence of which the supposition arose that the attack was perpetrated by Rzeslewo peasants. Dolhanski did not doubt that what happened was a sequel of the death sentence, of which he learned from Gronski. But this seemed to him "much more interesting." He thought that to meet the assailants and settle the issue in a proper manner would be a sort of hazard not devoid of a certain charm. And, in fact, soon a few more empty shells were found, but further search was without any results.

Then Dolhanski turned towards the highway leading to the city, and a half an hour later met Miss Anney, driving the britzka as fast as the horses could run; on the rear seat was the doctor.

It was market-day in the city. It happened therefore that at that time a dozen or more carts from Jastrzeb and

Rzeslewo were returning homeward, and there was considerable bustle on the road. In consequence of this, Miss Anney did not become frightened at the sight of three armed men approaching her from an opposite direction, and, after a while, recognizing Dolhanski, she began to slacken the speed of the horses.

"How is the wounded man?"

"Conscious. Good."

"How is it in the house?"

"Nothing new."

"God be praised."

The britzka again rolled on and after an interval was hidden in a cloud of dust, and Dolhanski, having naught else to do, returned also to Jastrzeb.

The forest rangers who were walking behind him began to converse with each other and interchange their ideas of a lady "who drives as well as the best coachman." But in Dolhanski's eyes there lingered also the picture of a young and charming maiden, with reins in hand, glowing countenance and wind-tossed hair. How much resolution and vivacity there was in all this! Never before did Miss Anney appear to him so enchanting. He knew from Gronski in what manner she had dashed to the city, and he was sincerely captivated by her. "That is not one of our transparent, jelly maidens who quiver at the slightest cause," he said to himself, "that is life, that is bravery, that is blood." He always admired everything which was English, beginning with the House of Lords and ending with the manufactured products of yellow leather, but at the present time his admiration waxed yet greater. "If her marriage portion is reckoned not in Polish gold pieces but in guineas," he soliloquized farther, "then Laudie was born with a caul." As he was an egotist, as well as a man of courage, he, after a while, ceased to bother his head about Krzycki and the danger which threatened all, and began to ruminate

over his own situation in the world. He recollected that at one time he could have sold himself for a fat marriage settlement but with such an appendage that he preferred to renounce all. But if he had only found such an appendage as Miss Anney! And suddenly he was beset by regret that, after making her acquaintance, he had not been more attentive to her and had not tried to arouse in her an interest in himself. "Who knows," he thought, "whether at the proper time, that was not possible." But, in such case, it was proper for him to appear before her as more knightly and romantic and less sardonic and fond of club life. Evidently that was not her genre. Above all he could not delude himself as to Pani Otocka. Dolhanski, from a certain time, had suspected his cousin of a secret attachment for Gronski, and at the same time could not understand what there was in Gronski that a woman could like. At the present time he was harassed by certain doubts about himself, for he felt, contrary to the good opinion which he entertained of himself, that there was something lacking in him; that in his internal mechanism some kind of wheel was wanting, without which, the entire mechanism did not go as it should. "For if," he cogitated farther, "I can sustain myself upon the surface, only through a rich marriage and my genre pleases neither Pani Otocka, nor Miss Anney, nor women in general, then I am a twofold ass: first because I thought I could please and again because I cannot afford to change." And he felt that he could not afford to change because of his indolence and from a fear that he would appear ridiculous.

"In view of this it will perhaps be necessary to end with Kajetana with her appurtenances."

In a sour temper he returned to Jastrzeb and, having given orders to the night watch, he went into the house where he received better news. The doctor announced that Ladislaus had a lacerated left shoulder, but as the

shot was fired from below and went upwards, the bullet coursed above the lungs. The second shot grazed over the ribs, tearing a considerable portion of the flesh, while the third one carried off the tip of the small finger. The wounds were painful but not dangerous. The coachman received a scalp wound. The most severely injured was the left forehorse, who, however, owing to the small calibre of the bullet was able to gallop with the other horses, but died an hour after the return.

All of which, however, tended to prove that the attack was not the swift revenge of the landless of Rzeslewo in defence of the forest rights, but a premeditated attempt. For this reason Gronski was of the opinion that Pani Otocka and Marynia ought to leave the following day. He wanted to escort them himself to the railroad station and then return. But both declared that they would remain until all were able to leave. On this occasion Marynia, for the first time in her life, quarrelled with Gronski and the matter actually ended in this, that Gronski had to yield. After all, the departure was not delayed for a long time, for the doctor promised that if great caution was observed, they could transfer the injured man to Warsaw in the course of a week. No one suggested an immediate departure to Miss Anney.

The rest of the evening was passed in conference. About ten o'clock Dr. Szremski, having performed all that was required of him, wanted to leave for the city, but out of regard for Pani Krzycki he remained for the night, and as he was much fatigued, he went to Gronski's room and fell asleep at once. The ladies divided the work among themselves in this manner: the two sisters were to watch Pani Krzycki, who after the temporary excitement suffered severely from heart trouble and asthma. Miss Anney in conjunction with Gronski undertook to pass the night with the wounded young man.

II

Out in the world the first glow of dawn was just visible when Ladislaus awoke, after a fitful and slightly feverish sleep. He did not feel badly; only a thirst was consuming him; he began to seek with his eyes for some one near who could give him water, and espied Miss Anney sitting at the window. She must have watched a long time for she dozed, with her hands resting inertly upon her knees, and her head was bowed so low that Ladislaus at first caught only a glimpse of her light hair, illuminated by the light of the green lamp. She immediately started up however, as if she had a premonition that the patient was awake, and it seemed to him that she divined his thoughts, for, approaching noiselessly, she asked:

"Do you wish any water?"

Krzycki did not answer; he only smiled and winked his eyes in sign of assent; when she handed the drink to him, he eagerly drained the glass, and afterwards gently taking her hand in his own, which was uninjured, he pressed it to his lips and held it there a long time.

"My dearest . . . my guardian angel," he whispered.

And again he pressed her hand to his lips.

Miss Anney did not even withdraw her hand; only with the other one she took the glass and placed it upon the small cupboard standing near the bed. She bent over him and said:

"It is necessary for you to keep quiet.—I will be with you until you get well, but now it is essential that you think only of your health; only of your health."

Her voice sounded in tones of quiet and gentle persuasiveness. Ladislaus dropped her hand. For some time he

moved his lips, but not a word could be heard. Evidently, he was weakened from emotion, as he grew pale and beads of perspiration stood upon his forehead.

Miss Anney began to wipe his face with a handkerchief and continued:

"Please be calm. If I thought that I was harming you, I would not come here, and I do want to be with you now. Not a word about anything until the wounds are healed; not a word. Promise me that."

A moment of silence ensued.

"Let the lady retire for a rest," Krzycki said in a pleading voice.

"I will go, I will go, but I am not at all tired. During the first half of the night, Pan Gronski sat up at your side and I slept. Really, I am not tired and I will sleep during the day. But you, sir, try to sleep. All that is necessary is for you not to look at me, and close your eyes. Then sleep will come of itself. Good-night, or rather good-day, for the day is breaking in the world."

In fact the morning's dawn reddened and gilded the sky, and the sun was about to rise at any moment. The light of the green lamp grew paler each moment and was merging into the brightness of the day. Ladislaus, desiring to show how he obeyed every word of his beloved guardian, closed his eyes, pretending to sleep, but after a while footsteps were heard in the hallway and the doctor entered accompanied by Miss Anney's maid, whose turn it now was to attend to the patient. The doctor was so terribly drowsy that instead of eyes he had two slits surrounded by swollen eyelids, but he was as jovial and noisy as usual. He examined the bandages, admitted that the dressing was in proper shape, felt the pulse, and found everything in good order. Afterwards he opened the windows to freshen the air which was saturated with iodoform.

"A splendid morning," said he. "Health flows from the skies. Let the windows remain open all day. As soon as they hitch the horses, I shall return to the city for I have patients who cannot wait. But I will come back in the evening and bring a nurse for our wounded friend."

After which, addressing Miss Anney, he said:

"Only do not let it get into your head to drive for me, alone. The injured man is getting along nicely — a slight fever, very slight. I will see Pani Krzycki before I leave. Do not let her leave her bed all day, and let her nieces watch her. To you, sir, I recommend the bed. It is permissible to inhale but not to breathe one's last breath. Ha! I will return about five in the evening, unless indeed, I am forced on the road to swallow a few pills from the socialist pharmacy. That is a stylish medicine and, it must be confessed, acts quickly."

"How is Mother?" asked Ladislaus in alarm.

At this the doctor again turned to Miss Anney.

"Order him to lie quiet for he will not mind me. Your mother has more than fifteen years. Yesterday she started up suddenly, forgetting her rheumatism and weak heart action, laid you in bed, waited for my arrival; was present at the dressing, and after learning that there was no danger — at once! bah! — it was necessary to put her to bed. That is always the way with our women. But nothing is the matter with your mother; the usual reaction after a nervous strain. When she came to herself, I ordered her to remain in bed and not to appear here under the penalty of death — for you. With that, I restrained her. Otherwise she would have stuck here all night. Now your filigree cousins are watching her. They also almost turned topsyturvy; then I would have had four patients in one house. That would be a harvest — ha? Luckily there was to be found in this house one soul with different nerves, who did not swoon poetically. Ha!"

"How he is chattering," thought Ladislaus.

But the doctor began to gaze with great respect at Miss Anney and continued:

"Rule Britannia! It is a pleasure to look at you, as I love God! What health, what nerves! She sat up all night until the morning, — and nothing! As if she freshly shook the dew off herself! I repeat once more, it is a pleasure to behold you. I am going to the dining-room to see if they will not give me some coffee before I leave, for I am hungry."

But before he left he said to Miss Anney and her maid:

"Let the lady go with me and drink something warm before going to sleep, and you, little miss, sit here beside Pan Krzycki. It will be necessary to take his temperature and write it down. In case anything happens let Pan Gronski know. I will tell him to look in here occasionally. Good-by!"

Allowing Miss Anney, who smiled at the wounded man and repeated "Good-by," to pass before him, he followed her. In the dining-room, they found not only coffee, but the two sisters with Gronski and Dolhanski. The former had sat up all night with Pani Krzycki, whose illness was much more serious than the doctor told the son. At one time it was even so serious that it was doubtful whether she would revive from a long faint. Both "filigree" sisters were almost worn out, and Marynia had eyelids of actual lily color. Gronski, by all means, wanted the doctor to examine her and prescribe something strengthening.

But he, feeling her pulse for a while, said:

"I will prescribe for you, miss, as a medicine, a certain maxim of Confucius, which says, 'If thou wouldst know the truth, it is better to sit than stand, better to lie down than sit, and rather than lie down, it is better to sleep.'"

"That is all very well," she answered, "but after all

that has taken place, I do not know whether I can sleep."

"Then let some one sing to you the lullaby, 'Ah, ah! Two little kittens'; but only not your sister, as for her I prescribe the same — until it is effective."

The rattle of the britzka interrupted further conversation. The doctor swallowed the hot coffee and took his leave. Dolhanski followed him and mounted a horse, held by a stable-boy. He announced that he would accompany the doctor through the forest.

"If that is for my safety, then it is absolutely unnecessary," said the doctor.

"I ride on horseback daily," replied Dolhanski, "and besides I want to see whether some May party has not again come to the Jastrzeb forest."

"No," answered the doctor, laughing. "I do not think that they will reappear so soon. They have in these matters a certain method. They prefer to be the hunters rather than the quarry, and understand that now it might come to a man hunt. In about a week or two, when they find out that their attempt was unsuccessful, it will be necessary to be more guarded."

"When will Krzycki be able to leave?"

"It all depends upon the purity of his blood; and I presume that it is pure. After all, it will not be necessary to wait in Jastrzeb for a complete cure. He had a pretty close call; that cannot be gainsaid. For if I had not come the same day, infection might have set in. But the antiseptic did its work. Ah, that Englishwoman who looks through a heavenly mist. There is a woman for me. What? Would you believe that at first I was upset with indignation at you gentlemen for permitting her to drive under those circumstances? Only later did she tell me the actual facts. If I do not fall in love with her, I am a marinated herring without milt."

"I would not advise it," said Dolhanski, "as it seems that in that territory there already has appeared a William the Conqueror."

"Do you think so? It may be possible! That also has occurred to my mind."

"Was it because the English prudery has disappeared in a corner?"

"No. Nursing a wounded man is a woman's duty and, in view of that, prudery must retire to a corner. Even yesterday's expedition demonstrated only courage and energy. But through that heavenly mist there reach our wounded friend such warm rays that — oh! But that does not prevent me from being in love. If old Dzwonkowski fell in love with your little cousin why should not I indulge in the same pleasure."

"In the same way you might fall in love with Saint Cecilia," said Dolhanski. "My cousin is not a woman on two feet, but a symbol."

And he stopped abruptly for he heard some voices coming from the depth of the forest and he sped his horse towards them.

"Nevertheless this clubman does not carry his soul on his shoulder," thought the doctor.

But it was only a false alarm, as it was merely village boys tending cattle. The doctor, who alighted from the britzka to rush to Dolhanski's assistance in case of need, soon saw them among the forest thickets. After a while Dolhanski reappeared and pressing on his eye the monocle which some twigs had displaced, said:

"That is only an innocent rural picture; cowherds and cows trespassing in other people's forests; nothing more."

After which he bade the doctor adieu and returned to the house.

Miss Anney had not yet retired to sleep, for he found her conversing with Gronski and engaged in winding iodo-

form gauze. At the sight of him, she raised her eyes from her work and asked:

"Anything new in the forest?"

"Yes, indeed; something has happened to the doctor. He has been shot."

At this, both suddenly rose, startled:

"What? Where? In the forest?"

"No! In Jastrzeb," answered Dolhanski.

III

LADISLAUS complied in every particular with Miss Anney's injunctions for, immediately after she left, he dozed again and did not waken until the rays of the sun, which had ascended high in the heaven, fell on his head. He then knit his brows and, having partly shaken off his drowsiness, requested that the roller-blinds be lowered. The black-haired maid approached the window, wishing to lower them, but as she did this too eagerly and did not retain her hold on the string, the roller-blind dropped so suddenly that it loosened completely from the fastenings and tumbled down on the window sill. Then the maid, ashamed of her awkwardness, leaped upon the chair and from the chair to the sill and began to place anew the rollers in the rings. Krzycki looked at her bent form; at her upraised arms and at her black coiled hair, with a not yet conscious gaze, blinking his eyes as if he could not recall for the time being who that was; and not until she jumped from the frame, displaying at the same time graceful and plump limbs in black stockings, did he know who was before him; and he said:

"Ah! It is Panna Pauly."

"It is I," answered the girl. "I beg your pardon for making so much noise."

She blushed like a rose under his glance, and he recollected how he once saw her attired only in azure watery pearls; so he gazed at her with greater curiosity and said:

"That does not matter. I thank you, little Miss, for your solicitude."

At the same time, as a sign of gratitude, he moved the hand lying on the bed-quilt but feeling simultaneously a piercing pain, he made a wry face and hissed.

And she sat on the edge of the bed, leaned over him, and asked with intense anxiety:

"Does it pain?"

"It does."

"Can I hand you anything? Shall I call any one?"

"No, no."

For a certain time, silence followed. Ladislaus frowned and clinched his teeth; after which, drawing a deep breath, he said, as if with a certain rage:

"This was done for me by those scoundrels."

"Oh, if they only fell into my hands," she replied through her set teeth.

Such a fathomless hatred glistened in her eyes and her entire countenance assumed such an expression of cruelty, that it might serve as a model for a Gorgon face. Ladislaus was so astonished at this sight that he forgot about his pain.

Again silence ensued. The maid recollected herself after a while, but her cheeks grew so pale that the dark down above her lips became more marked:

She then asked: "What can I do to relieve you?"

Her voice now rang with such cordial solicitude that Ladislaus smiled and answered:

"Nothing, unless it be to commiserate with me."

And in a moment she was transported with spasmodic grief; she flung her face at his feet, and, embracing them with her arms, began to kiss them through the quilt. Her raven-like head and bent body shook from sobbing.

"Why little lady! Panna Pauly!" cried Ladislaus.

And he was compelled to repeat this several times before she heard him. Finally she rose and, covering her eyes with her hands, went to the window, pressed her

face against the pane, and for some time remained motionless. Afterwards she began to wipe her eyes and readjust her hair, as if in fear that somebody, entering unexpectedly, might surmise what had taken place.

In the meantime, all the moments in which he had come in contact with her coursed through Ladislaus' mind, commencing with meeting her on the dark path, when she told him that a were-wolf did not look like that, and the vision in the bath-room, until his conversation with her, after that vision, on the yoked elm grove near the pond. He recalled how from that time she alternately reddened and grew pale at the sight of him; how she drooped her eyes and how she sent them after him whenever it seemed to her that he was not observing. From one view, Ladislaus accepted this as the sequel of the incident in the bath-room; from another as admiration for his shapeliness. This admiration, indeed, flattered his masculine vanity, but he did not give it much thought, as, having his mind absorbed with Miss Anney, her servant did not concern him. Now, however, he understood that this was something more than the blandishments of an artful chambermaid after a handsome young heir, and that this maiden had become distractedly infatuated with him and in a kind of morbid manner. His love for Miss Anney was too deep and true for him to be pleased with such a state of affairs or for him to think that after his wounds were healed he could take advantage of the maiden's feelings in the fashion of a gallant. On the contrary, the thought that he had unwittingly aroused such feelings appeared disagreeable and irksome to him. He was seized by a fear of what might result from it. There came to him, as if in a vision, troubles, scenes, and entanglements, which such a passion might produce. He understood that this was a fire with which he could not thoughtlessly play; that he would have to be careful and not give her any en-

couragement. He decided also, notwithstanding the pity and sympathy he felt in the depth of his heart for the maiden, to avoid in the future all conversations, all jests, and everything which might draw her nearer to him, encourage intimacy, or provoke in the future outbursts similar to the one of that day. It even occurred to him to request Miss Anney not to send her to him any more, but he abandoned that resolution, observing that it might cause sorrow or cast upon him a shadow of ludicrousness. Finally he came to the conclusion that above all it was incumbent upon him not to ask the maid about anything; not to demand any explanation as to the meaning of that outbreak and those tears, and to behave coolly and distantly.

In the meantime the maiden, at the window, having regained her composure, again approached the bed and spoke in a meek and hesitating voice:

"I beg your pardon, sir. Be not angry at me, sir."

He closed his eyes and only after an interval replied:

"Little lady, I am not angry, but I need peace."

"I beg pardon," she repeated yet more meekly.

However she observed that he spoke in a different tone, drier and colder than previously, and intense uncertainty was depicted upon her countenance, for she did not know whether this was the momentary dissatisfaction of the patient, who, in reality, did desire quiet or whether it was the displeasure of the young heir at her — a servant maid — having dared to betray her feelings. Fearing, however, to again offend him, she became silent and seating herself upon the chair which Miss Anney had occupied, she took from the commode the work which previously had been brought and began to sew, glancing from time to time with great uneasiness, and as if in fear, at Ladislaus.

He also cast stealthy glances at her, and seeing her regular features, as if carved out of stone, her sharply out-

lined brows, the dark down above her lips, and the energetic, almost inflexible, expression of her face, he thought that it would be much easier for a man who could arouse the thoughts and feelings of such a girl to form various ties than later to be able to free himself from them.

IV

CONTRARY to expectations, the doctor did not arrive that day, owing to an unusual number of engagements and a few important operations which he was compelled to perform without delay. Instead, he sent a young hospital attendant, skilled in dressing wounds, with a letter in which he requested Gronski to inform the ladies that they should consider his postponed visit as proof that no danger actually threatened the wounded man. Ladislaus, however was not pleased with this news, for the wounds tormented him acutely; particularly the flesh torn by the bullet along the ribs afflicted him painfully; and besides, his mother felt worse. The asthmatic spell recurred, after which a general weakness followed, so that notwithstanding her warmest wishes she was not able to rise from her bed. Pani Otocka did not leave her for the entire day, and at night her place was to be taken by Miss Anney, who, however, needing rest after the recent events and, passing a sleepless night, was sent to sleep by both sisters and Gronski. The rôle of the housekeeper of Jastrzeb was assumed by Marynia, for she wanted by all means to be useful, and was not permitted to attend to the patients. Instead, she was intrusted with all the keys; the management of the house; with conferring and taking an accounting with the cook whom she feared a little and did not like, because he looked upon her as if she was a child who was amusing herself rather than one upon whose shoulders rested the responsibility of superintending everything. She adopted a mien full of importance, but nevertheless "the dear gentleman," that is Gonski, had

to promise that he would be present, as if by chance, in the room when the accounting was taking place.

As, after the arrival of the doctor on the third day, it appeared that Ladislaus' condition was quite favorable and Pani Krzycki's asthmatic spells were leaving her and her nerves were getting in order, the general aspect of Jastrzeb became calmer and happier. Dolhanski began to fill with a certain humor the rôle of a generalissimo of all the armed forces of Jastrzeb while Gronski played the part of military governor. The doctor brought with him a second nurse, who thenceforth was to alternate with the one who came previously. This relieved the ladies of the house of the necessity of continual watchfulness and unnecessary fatigue. Ladislaus alone was dissatisfied with the arrangement, for he understood that now Miss Anney would not pass days and nights in his chamber, and that in all probability he would not see her until he was able to leave his bed. In fact, it happened that way. Several times during the day she would come to the anteroom, send through the attendants whatever was needed, inquire about his health and also send a "good-night" or "good-day" but would not enter the room. Ladislaus sighed, swore quietly, and made life miserable for his attendants, and when he learned from Dolhanski of the enthusiasm with which the doctor spoke of Miss Anney he began to suspect him of purposely sending the attendants in order to make it more difficult for him to see her. His mother rose the fourth day and, feeling much better, visited him daily and sat up with him for hours. Ladislaus often asked himself the question whether she surmised his feelings. They were indeed known to all the guests in the house, but there was a possibility that she did not suspect anything, as for a considerable time before the occurrence in the forest she did not, in truth, leave her room; in consequence of which she seldom saw

her son and Miss Anney together. Krzycki often deliberated over the question whether he should speak with his mother at once about it or defer the matter to a later date. In favor of the first thought, there was the consideration that his mother, while he lay in bed wounded, would not dare to interpose any strenuous objections from fear that his condition might grow worse. But on the other hand, such calculation, in which his beloved one and the whole happiness of his life were involved, appeared to him that day as miserable craftiness. He thought besides that to extort an assent from his mother through his sickness would be something derogatory to Miss Anney, before whom the doors of the Jastrzeb manor-house and the arms of the entire family should be widely and joyfully opened. But he was restrained by another consideration. And this was that, notwithstanding the conversation he at one time had with Gronski, notwithstanding the words he exchanged with the lady, notwithstanding her solicitude, her sacrifices, and the courage with which she did not hesitate to drive for the doctor, and finally notwithstanding the visible marks of feeling which could be discerned in every glance she bestowed upon him, Ladislaus doubted and did not dare to believe in his own good fortune. He was young, inexperienced, in love not only up to his ears but like a student; therefore full of alternating uncertainties, hopes, joys, and doubts. He doubted also himself. At times he felt at his shoulders wings, as it were, and in his soul a desire for lofty flights; a latent ability to perform acts clearly heroic; and at other times he thought: "Who am I, that such a flower should fall upon my bosom? There are people who are endowed with talent; who possess education; and others who have millions, and I, what? I am a mere nobleman farmer, who will all his life dig the soil, like a mole. Have I then the right to pinion to such a life, or rather to confine in a

sort of cage such a paradisiacal bird, which soars freely across the firmament for the delectation and admiration of mankind?" And he was seized by despair. But when he pictured to himself that the moment might arrive when this paradisiacal bird might fly away forever from him, then he looked upon it with amazement as if upon a calamity which he did not deserve. He also had his hours of hope, especially in the morning when he felt better and stronger. Then he recalled everything that had taken place between them, from her first arrival at Jastrzeb and his meeting her at Zarnowski's funeral until that last night when he pressed her hand to his lips and gained greater confidence. Why, at that time, she told him "not a word about anything until the wounds are healed." Therefore through that alone she gave to him the right to repeat to her that she was dearer to him than the whole world and to surrender into her hands his fate, his future, and his entire life. Let her do with them what she will.

In the meanwhile his mother will accustom herself to her, will grow more intimate, and become more attached to her. And her maternal heart is so full of admiration and gratitude for what Miss Anney had done for him that from her lips fell the words "God sent her here." Ladislaus smiled at the thought that his mother, however, ascribed the sacrifices and courage of the young maiden not to any ardent feeling but to an exceptionally honest heart, as well as to English training, which was conducive to energy alike in men and women. And she had likewise repeated to Pani Otocka several times that she would like to bring up her Anusia to be such a brave woman; give her such strength, health, and such love for her "fellow-men." Pani Otocka smiled also, hearing these praises, and Ladislaus thought that Miss Anney perhaps would not have done the same for her fellow-men, and this thought filled him with happiness.

Eventually he became quite certain that his mother would consent to his marriage with Miss Anney, but he was anxious as to how she would agree. And in this regard he was much distressed. His mother, judged by former requirements and conceptions, was a person of more than medium education. She possessed high social refinement, read a number of books, and was proficient in the French and Italian languages. During her younger days she passed considerable time abroad, but only her closest friends could tell how many national and hereditary prejudices were concealed in her and to what extent all that was not Polish, particularly if it did not of necessity come from France, appeared to her peculiar, outlandish, strange, and even shocking. This appeared accidentally once before the attack upon Ladislaus when she saw Miss Anney's English prayer-book and, opening it, noticed a prayer beginning with "Oh Lord." Belonging to a generation which did not study English, and having lived in retirement for many years in Jastrzeb, Pani Krzycki could not imagine the Lord other than a being with yellow whiskers, dressed in checkered clothes, and to Marynia's great amusement could not by any means understand how the Divinity could be thus addressed. In vain Ladislaus explained to her that in the French and Polish languages analogical titles are given to God. She regarded that as something different, and exacted a promise from Miss Anney that she would pray from a Polish book, which she promised to buy for her.

Finally the fact that Miss Anney was not in all probability a member of the nobility would play an important part. Ladislaus feared that his mother, having consented to the marriage, might in the depths and secrecy of her soul, deem it a mésalliance. This thought irritated and depressed him immeasurably and was one of the reasons why he postponed his consultation with his mother until their arrival in Warsaw.

He was angered yet more at his enforced confinement in his bed; so that for three days he declared each evening that he would rise the following morning, and when on the fourth day Miss Anney and Marynia said to him through the doorway, "Good-day," he actually did get up, but in his weakened condition, he suffered from dizziness and was forced to lie down again. He was steadily improving, however; he continued to sigh more and more and felt his inactivity most keenly.

"I have got enough of this loquacious doctor," he said to Gronski, "enough of dressings and iodoform. I envy not only you, sir, but even Dolhanski, who is roaming about on my horses all over creation, and very likely reaches as far as Gorek."

"He does," answered Gronski gayly, "and this leads me to think that he makes a mystery of it, for he has ceased to talk about those ladies."

This was but a half truth for Dolhanski did actually go to Gorek but did not remain entirely silent about the ladies, for returning the next day, he entered Ladislaus' room, bearing with him still the odor of the horse, and said:

"Imagine to yourself that the Wlocek ladies received a command from some kind of committee from under a dark star to pay under the penalty of death one thousand roubles for 'party' purposes."

"There you have it!" cried Gronski. "Now that is becoming an every-day occurrence. Who knows whether similar commands are not awaiting us upon our desks in Warsaw?"

"Well, what of it?" asked Ladislaus.

"Nothing," answered Dolhanski; "those ladies first argued as to who was to first expose her breast to shield the other; then fainted; after that they came to, then began to bid each other farewell, and finally asked me my advice as to what was to be done."

"And what advice did you give them?"

"I advised them to tell the executors of the command, who would come for the money, that their plenipotentiary and treasurer, Pan Dolhanski, resided at such and such address in Warsaw."

"Really, did you advise them to do that?"

"I give you my word."

"In such a case, they will undoubtedly call upon you."

"You can imagine what rich booty they will get! I also will have some recreation in these tedious times."

"Pardon me," said Gronski, "the times are trying; that is certain, but no one can say that they are tedious."

"But for whom?" answered Dolhanski. "If I ever borrow money from you, then I will have to conform to your inclination, but before that time you cannot draw me into any political discussion. In the meantime I will only tell you this much, that I am the only social microbe that can remain at perfect peace. All that I require is that 'bridge' should be going normally at the club and soon this will be impossible. These times may be interesting to you but not for me."

"At any rate," observed Gronski, "a certain ventilation of torpid conditions is taking place, and since you compared yourself to a microbe, by the same token, you admit that these are times for disinfection."

At this Dolhanski turned to Ladislaus.

"Thank Gronski," he said, "for the disinfection started with you; from which the plain inference is to be drawn that you are a more harmful microbe than I am."

"Get married, get married," answered Ladislaus banteringly; "for you, a good marriage settlement would be the best cure for pessimism."

"That may be possible, as in that case, I may have something with which I can leave this dear country and settle elsewhere. I once told you that Providence speaks

through the lips of little innocents. But I should have thought of marriage when in the perspective there were no Goreks, but instead, four million franks."

"Did you have such an opportunity?"

"As you see me here. It happened in Ostend; an old Belgian relict of a manufacturer of preserves, and having cash to the amount specified, wanted to marry me and that for the waiting."

"And what?"

"And nothing. I remember what Pan Birkowski, who at that time was in Ostend, told me. 'Do business,' he said. 'At the worst, you may leave the old woman two millions and leave her in the lurch, and you can take two millions with you and enjoy yourself like a king.' "

"And what did you say to that?"

"And I said this to that: What is that? Am I to give from my own hard-earned money two millions to an ugly old woman? For nothing! And now I think that for a mere quibble, I permitted a fortune to slip away from me and that the time may come when owing to a 'retirement from business' I will have to sacrifice myself for a smaller price."

Gronski and Ladislaus began to laugh, but Dolhanski, who spoke with greater bitterness than they supposed, shrugged his shoulders and said:

"Amuse yourselves, amuse yourselves. One of you already has received a taste of the times and the other, God grant, will not escape so easily. Nice times, indeed! Chaos, anarchy, political orgy, lack of any kind of authority, the dance of dynamite with the knout, and the downfall of 'bridge.' And you laugh!"

V

NEVERTHELESS that which Dolhanski said about a want of any kind of authority appeared to be not exactly the truth, for, after an interval of one week, the authorities did give signs of life.

An imposing armed force, together with gendarmes and police, made its appearance.

Of course the perpetrators of the attempt upon Krzycki did not wait a whole week for the arrival at Jastrzeb of a military relief, as they evidently had engagements in other parts of the county. As a result the Jastrzeb, as well as the Rzeslewo, forests appeared to be deserted.

In lieu of this, about a score of men in Jastrzeb, itself, were placed under arrest. Among these were the two forest rangers, the old coachman who was wounded at the time of the attack, and all the workingmen at the saw-mill.

In the manor-house all the passports were verified with exceeding care, reports were written, and the host, hostess, and guests, not excluding the ladies, were subjected to a strict examination.

From these examinations it developed that in reality they did not come on account of the attempt upon the proprietor of Jastrzeb, but for the purpose of apprehending a dangerous revolutionist, a certain Laskowicz, who, according to the most reliable information secured by the police, was hiding in Jastrzeb and was shielded by its denizens.

The declaration of the Krzyckis to the police, that in due season the passport of Laskowicz was forwarded, and

if Laskowicz had left the city he must have received it, as well as the assurances of all present that Laskowicz was not in Jastrzeb did not find any credence.

The authorities were too experienced and shrewd to believe such nonsense and they detected in them "an evil design, and want of sincerity and cordial candor."

The house also was subjected to a most painstaking search, beginning in the garret and ending in the cellar. They knocked on the walls to ascertain whether there were any secret hiding places. They searched among the dresses and linen of the women; in the hearth, under the divans, in the drawers, in the boxes for phenicine pastilles, which Gronski brought with him; and finally in the manor outbuildings, in the mangers of the stable, in the milk churners, in the tar-boxes, and even in the beehives, whose inmates, undoubtedly being permeated with the evil-disposition prevalent in Jastrzeb, resisted the search in a manner as evil disposed as it was painful.

But as the search, notwithstanding its thoroughness and the intelligence with which it was conducted, was not productive of any results, they took a hundred and some tens of books, the farm register, the entire private correspondence of the hosts as well as the guests, the bone counters used in playing cards, a little bell with a Napoleonic figure, a safety razor, a barometer, and, notwithstanding the license which Krzycki possessed, all the fowling pieces, not excepting a toy-gun with which corks were shot and which belonged to little Stas.

Ladislaus himself would have been undoubtedly arrested as an accomplice, if the doctor, who treated the captain for his heart trouble, had not arrived and if Dolhanski, growing impatient beyond all endurance, had not shown the captain a message before sending it to the city. It was addressed to the highly influential general W., with whom Dolhanski played whist at the club, and it

complained of the brutality and the arbitrariness of the search.

This to a considerable extent cooled off the ardor of the captain and his subordinates, who previously, at the scrutiny of the passports, had learned that Dolhanski was a member of the club.

In this manner Ladislaus preserved his liberty, supplemented by police surveillance, and little Stas regained his toy-gun for shooting corks. The captain could not return the arms as he had peremptory orders in black and white to confiscate even the ancient fowling-pieces of the whole community.

"Doux pays! Doux pays!" cried Dolhanski after the departure of the police. "Revolvers now can be found only in the hands of the bandits. In view of this I will submit to a demission as the commander-in-chief of the Jastrzeb armed forces, land as well as naval. We are now dependent upon the kindness or unkindness of fate."

"Go to Warsaw, ladies and gentlemen, to-morrow," said the doctor; "here there is no joking."

"Let us go to Warsaw," repeated Dolhanski, "and, not losing any time, enroll in the ranks of the believers in expropriation. I regard social revolutionists as the only insurance association in this country which does really insure."

"From accidents," added Krzycki; "and we shall insure with my personal friend and 'accomplice' Laskowicz."

To this Dolhanski replied:

"That accomplice gave you a payment on account. In the future you will receive yet more."

To Gronski's mind came thoughts of the personal enmity of the young medical student to Krzycki and the letter of Laskowicz to Marynia, of which he among the men in Jastrzeb alone knew.

It was quite probable that Laskowicz saw in Ladis-

laus a rival and future aspirant for the hand of Panna Marynia who, besides, had nipped in the bud his work in Rzeslewo and that he might have thought that he actually could gratify his hatred from personal consideration, and in the name of the "cause."

Laskowicz, himself, in his own way, might have been an honest man, but the party ethics were, in relation to the antiquated morality, revolutionary, and sanctioned such things.

But at present there was not much time to ponder over that; so after a while Gronski waved his hand and said:

"Whether or not the hand of Laskowicz is imbrued in this the future will show. Now we must think of something else. I assert positively that I will take away my ladies from here, but I wish that the entire Jastrzeb family would follow my example."

After which, he addressed the doctor.

"Would it be safe for Ladislaus to travel to-morrow?"

"He? Even as far as England," answered the doctor.

Gronski and Dolhanski laughed at these words but Ladislaus blushed like a student and said:

"It will be necessary to inform the ladies."

"And to-morrow the general exodus will take place," added Gronski.

And he went to the ladies, who received the news of the decision with evident relief. Both sisters decided to have Pani Krzycki at their residence in Warsaw, but she, desiring to be with her son, would not accept the invitation; and only consented when Gronski announced that he would take Ladislaus to his home and guaranteed that he should not suffer for want of care and comfort. Miss Anney, whose apartments were directly opposite to those of Pani Otocka also offered her rooms for the use of the younger members of the Krzycki family and their female teachers. In the meanwhile the doctor permitted Ladislaus

to get up, so that he would not have to start on his journey directly from his bed. In the evening the entire company assembled on the garden veranda. There was missing only Dolhanski who rode off to Gorek, for he had decided to advise Pani Wlocek and Panna Kajetana to remove to the city likewise. Ladislaus, after a considerable loss of blood and a somewhat lengthy confinement in bed, looked pale and miserable, but his countenance had acquired a more subtile expression and actually become handsome. At the present time the ladies were occupied with him, as an invalid, with extraordinary watchfulness. He was a person who attracted general sympathy; therefore, though from time to time his eyes grew dim, he assured his mother that it was well with him, and he really was delighted to breathe the fresh evening air. At times he was overcome by a light drowsiness. Then he closed his eyelids and the conversation hushed, but when he opened them again he saw directed towards himself the eyes of his mother and, illuminated by the setting sun, the young faces of the ladies, which appeared to him simply angelic. He was surrounded by love and friendship; therefore it was well with him. His heart surged with feelings of gratitude, and at the same time with regret that those good Jastrzeb days would soon end. In his soul he cherished a hope that he would not be absent from Jastrzeb long, and promised himself a speedy return, and he promised this with all the strength with which a person craves happiness. Nevertheless, the times were so strange, so uncertain, and so many things might happen which it was impossible to foresee, that involuntarily a fear generated in his heart as to what turn the current of events would take; what the future of the country would be, and what, in a year or two, would become of Jastrzeb, which, indeed, became precious to him for it opened before him the portals, beyond which he beheld the great bright-

ness of happiness. Love, as well as a bird, needs a nest. So Ladislaus plainly could not conceive of himself and the light-haired lady being anywhere else than at Jastrzeb. For this, his heart beat with redoubled force, when glancing at her, he indulged in fancies and imagined that perhaps after a year, or sooner, she will sit upon the same veranda, as the lady of the house and as his wife. Then he turned towards her and asked her with his soul and eyes: "Dost thou guess and perceive my thoughts?" But she, perhaps because she was restrained by the presence of so many witnesses, did not reply to his glances; sitting as if immersed in thought and letting her gaze follow the swallows, which flitted so nimbly above the trees of the garden and the pond. Ladislaus, when he now looked at her was impressed, as if with certain admiration, at the contrast between her full-grown form, powerful arms, and well developed bosom and her small, girlish face. But he saw in all this only a new charm and spell under whose powers there flew at times through his love a burning desire similar indeed to pain and stifling the breath in his breast.

In the meantime the sun sank measurably and began to bathe in the ruddy evening twilight. From the freshly mown lawns came a strong fragrance of the little hay heaps, which were warmed by the daily summer heat. Somehow the air with the approach of night became more bracing, for, from the alder-trees bordering on the pond, came from time to time a cool breath, so weak and light, however, that the leaves on the trees did not stir. The swallows described curves higher and higher above the reddened surface of the pond. In the lofty poplars with trimmed tops a stork clattered in his nest, now stooping with his head backward and then lowering it as if bowing to the setting sun or officiating at the evening vespers.

"I will play something as a farewell to Jastrzeb," Marynia suddenly announced.

"Ah, beloved creature!" said Gronski; "shall I go for the stand and notes?"

"No. I will play something from memory."

And saying this, she handed to Miss Anney an album with views of Jastrzeb, and hurried upstairs. In a short time she returned with her violin. For a time she kept it propped on her shoulder and raising her eyes upwards, considered what she should play. She selected Schumann's "Ich grolle nicht." The overflowing tones filled the quiet of the garden. They began to sing, muse, long, and weep; oscillate, hush, and slumber, and with them the human soul acted in unison. Sorrow became more melancholy, yearning more longing, and love more tender and deeply enamoured. And "the little divinity" continued playing — white in her muslin dress — calm, with pensive eyes lost somewhere in the illimitable distance, immaculate, and as if borne to heaven by music and her own playing. To Gronski it seemed that he had before him some kind of mystic lily, and he began in his soul to say to her, as it were, a litany, in which every word was a worship of the little violinist, because she was playing and she awoke in him a love as destitute of the slightest earthly dross as if she were not a maiden composed of blood and flesh, but in reality some kind of mystic lily.

Marynia had ceased to play and her hand, with the violin, hung at her side. No one thanked her; no one uttered a word, for the strains of that music lingered with all and, echo-like, it was yet playing within them. Pani Otocka unwittingly drew nearer to Gronski as if they were attracted towards each other by their mutual worship of this beloved child. In Pani Krzycki's eyes glittered tears, which under the spell of the music were contributed and provoked by memories of former years and the present

suffering of her son and fresh worries about him, and the uncertainty of the future. Miss Anney sat in reverie, holding unknowingly between her knees the album, which during Marynia's playing had dropped from her hands; and through the open doors, in the already dimmed depths of the salon, could be seen the indistinct form of a woman, who evidently also was listening to the music.

A somewhat stronger breeze which blew from the alder-trees awoke all, as if from a half-dream. Then Pani Krzycki turned towards her son:

"A chill is coming from the pond. Perhaps you may wish to return to your room."

"No," he answered, "I feel better than I have felt for a long time."

And he began to assure her that he did not feel any chill and afterwards appealed to the doctor, who, lulled to sleep by the music, could not at once understand what was the matter.

"Can Laudie remain?" asked Pani Krzycki.

"He can, he can; only as soon as the sun disappears, it will be necessary to cover him better."

Afterwards the doctor looked at his watch and added:

"It is time for me to go, but I have had so few evenings like this that it is a hardship to leave. As God sees, it is a hardship."

And here he began to rub his fatigued brow with the palm of his hand. Pani Krzycki and Ladislaus declared that they would not permit him to leave before supper. The doctor again looked at his watch, but before he could make any reply there appeared upon the veranda the same feminine figure that had been listening to the music in the depths of the parlor, but this time with two plaids upon her arm.

"Is that you, Pauly?" said Miss Anney. "Ah, how sensible you are."

And Panna Pauly began to cover Ladislaus with the plaids. She placed one over his shoulders and the other around his limbs. In doing this she knelt and bent in such a way that for a moment her breast rested on Krzycki's knee.

"Thank you, little Miss, thank you," he said, somewhat confused.

She glanced quickly into his eyes and then left without a word.

"But I have taken your plaids," Ladislaus said addressing Miss Anney.

"That does not matter. I am dressed warmly. Only, you, sir, will have to take care that the wounded shoulder is well covered."

And approaching him, she began to push lightly and carefully a corner of the plaid between the back of the chair and his shoulder.

"I am not hurting you?" she asked.

"No, no. How can I thank you?"

And he looked at her with such enamoured eyes that for the first time it occurred to his mother that there might be something more than gratitude in this.

She glanced once or twice at Pani Zosia's delicate countenance, and sighed, and her heart was oppressed with fear, disquiet, and regret. This was her ideal for her son; this was her secret fancy. She, indeed, had fallen in love with her whole soul with the young Englishwoman, and if foreign blood did not course in her veins, she would not have had any objections, but nevertheless this first fleeting suspicion that the structure, which she, in her soul, had erected from the moment she became intimate with Zosia, might crumble, was to her immeasurably disagreeable. For a time she felt, as it were, a dislike for Miss Anney. She determined also from that moment to observe them both more carefully, and to speak with Gronski.

But in the further course of the evening her hopes revived, for when the company returned to the salon it seemed to her after a time that what she had seen on the veranda was an illusion. In fact that day did not end for Ladislaus and Miss Anney as serenely as the setting sun had augured. A cooler wind blew between them, and Pani Krzycki could not know that the reason for it, on the part of her boy, was jealousy. Miss Anney, after the return to the parlor, began, on the side, a conversation with the doctor which continued so long that Ladislaus became irritated. He observed that she spoke not only with animation, but also with a desire to please. He saw the brightened visage of the doctor, from which it was easy to read that the conversation afforded him sincere pleasure, and a serpent stung Ladislaus' heart. He could not overhear what Miss Anney was saying. It seemed to him only that she was urging something. On the other hand, the doctor could not speak so quietly, but to Krzycki's eavesdropping ears from time to time came such fragmentary expressions as "I intended to do that, only after a week"; "Ha!" "Some may object"; "If that is the case, very well"; "It is well known how England conquers"; "Good, good."

Ladislaus decided with all possible coolness to ask Miss Anney whom England had now subjugated and whether the newspapers had made any mention of it, but when Miss Anney and the doctor at the conclusion of their tête-à-tête had rejoined the rest of the company, he changed his plan and, with the offended dignity of a schoolboy who is ready not only to spite those dear to him but also himself, he determined to cover himself with the cloak of indifference. With this view he turned to Zosia and began to inquire about the Zalesin estate and begged her permission to inspect it; and she told him that it would give her great pleasure. He thanked her so warmly that his

mother was led into an error. Miss Anney tried several times to participate in the conversation, but receiving from him indifferent replies, surprised and slightly touched, began to listen to what Gronski was saying.

After supper the doctor announced that he would have to leave. For a while he spoke with Gronski, and then took his leave of the ladies, repeating, "Until to-morrow; at the railway station." He advised Ladislaus to return immediately to his room and secure a good rest before proceeding on his journey. Gronski, after escorting the doctor to the gate, accompanied Ladislaus to his room, and when they found themselves alone, perceiving his mien and easily surmising the cause asked: "What ails you? You are so agreeable."

And Krzycki answered with some irritation: "I am still feeling weak; otherwise I am as usual."

But Gronski shrugged his shoulders.

"These," said he, "are the usual misunderstandings of lovers, but you, above all, are a child and caused her unpleasantness. And do you know what for? Simply because she urged Szremski to accompany you to Warsaw."

Ladislaus' heart quivered, but he put a good face on a bad matter and would not yet be reconciled.

"I do not feel at all weak and can get along without his assistance."

To this Gronski replied:

"Good-night to you and your logic."

And he left the room.

But Ladislaus when he was undressed and in bed, suddenly felt tears welling in his eyes and began with extraordinary tenderness to beg pardon of — the pillow.

VI

GRONSKI, who by nature was very obliging and devoted to his friends, was at the same time a man of ample means and high culture; in consequence of which Ladislaus found in his home not only such care as sincere good will alone can bestow, and comforts, but also various things which were lacking in Jastrzeb. He found, especially, books, a few paintings, engravings, and various small objects of vertu; moreover, the residence was spacious, well-ventilated, and not over-crowded with unnecessary articles. Thanks to the host a highly intellectual and esthetic atmosphere prevailed, in which the young heir felt indeed smaller and less self-confident than in Jastrzeb, but which he breathed with pleasure. He was seized, however, with a fear that by a lengthy stay he would cause his older friend trouble, and on the following evening he began to argue with Gronski about going to a hotel.

"Even the doctor considers me well," he said. "The best proof of it is that he permits me to go about the city in three days."

"I heard something about five," answered Gronski.

"But that was yesterday; so, not counting to-day, three remain. You have your habits which you must not change on my account. It is indeed a pleasure to look at all these things; so I will come here, but it is one thing to visit you for an hour, or even two, and another to introduce confusion into your mode of life."

"I will only say this," answered Gronski, "Pani Otocka and Panna Marynia regard me as an old bachelor and promised to make a call to-morrow, or the day after, as they have often done before, in the company of Miss Anney.

Do you see that armchair? On it, during the music-playing, sat your light-haired beauty. Go, go to the hotel, and we will see who, besides your mother, will visit you."

"You are too good."

"I am an old egotist. You see that I have a few old household effects, which, during the course of my life, I have collected; but one thing, though I were as rich as Morgan and Jay Gould combined, I can unfortunately never buy, and that is youth. And you have so much of it that you could establish a bank and issue stock. From you rays plainly emanate. Let them illuminate and warm me a little. In other words, do not worry, and keep quiet if you are comfortable here with me."

"I only do not desire to be spoiled by too much attention, for, speaking sincerely, I feel I am strong enough now."

"So much the better. Thank God, Miss Anney, and the doctor that the journey did not injure you. That is what I feared a little."

"It did not hurt me, neither did it help."

"How is that?"

"Because I had a hope that on the road I could tell my bright queen that which I hid in my soul, but in the meantime it developed that this was a foolish hope. We sat in the compartment like herrings. The doctor hung over me continually, like a hangman over a good soul, and there was not a chance, even for a moment."

"Never, never make any avowals in a railway car, for in the rumble and noise the most pathetic passages are lost. Finally, as Laskowicz has not dispatched you to the other world, you will easily find an opportunity."

"Do you really think that it was the work of Laskowicz?"

"No. But if ever I should ascertain that it was he, I would not be much surprised; for such a situation, in which one could gratify self and serve a good cause, occurs rarely."

"How gratify self and serve a good cause?"

"Good in his judgment. Do you not live from human sweat and blood?"

"That is very true. But why should my death afford him any gratification personally?"

"Because he has conceived a hatred for you; has fallen in love with some one and regards you as a rival."

Hearing this, Ladislaus jumped up as if scalded.

"What, would he dare?"

"I assure you that he would dare," replied Gronski quietly, "only he made a mistake. But that he is not wanting in courage he gave proofs when he wrote an avowal of love to Marynia."

Ladislaus opened wide his eyes and began to wink:

"What was that?"

"I did not want to speak to you about it in Jastrzeb, as at that time you often drove to the city. I feared that you might meet him and might start a disagreeable brawl. But at present I can tell you every thing; Laskowicz has fallen in love with Marynia and wrote a letter to her, which of course remained unanswered."

"And he thought that I also am in love with Marynia."

"Permit me; that would not be anything extraordinary. He might have overheard something. Whoever is in love usually imagines that every one is reaching after the object of his love. Understand that Laskowicz did not confide in me, but that is my hypothesis which, if it is erroneous, so much the better for Laskowicz. The party sent you a death sentence in consequence of his reports and this was working in his hand for personal reasons. After all, he may not have participated personally in the attempt — "

"Did you see him after that letter?"

"How could I see him, since he wrote after his departure. But it was lucky that I advised Pani Otocka to burn that lucubration, for if the letter had been found

during the search at Jastrzeb, you can readily understand what inferences the acuteness of the police might have drawn."

Anger glittered in Ladislaus' eyes.

"I prefer that Miss Anney be not involved," he said; "nevertheless I would not advise Laskowicz to meet me. That such a baboon, as Dolhanski says, should dare to lift his eyes to our female relative in our home and, in addition thereto, write to her — this I regard plainly as an insult which I cannot forgive."

"In all probability you will never meet him; so you will not move a finger."

"I? Then you do not know me. Why not?"

"Among other reasons, out of consideration for our pleasant situation. Consider; duels they will not accept and in this they are right. What then? Will you cudgel him with a cane or pull his ears?"

"That is quite possible."

"Wait! In the first place there was nothing in the letter resembling an insult and, again, what further? The police would take you both into custody, and there they would discover that they had caught Laskowicz, a revolutionary bird, whom they have been seeking for a long time and would send him to Siberia, or even hang him. Can you take anything like that upon your conscience?"

"May the deuce take these times," cried Ladislaus. "A man is always in a situation from which there is no escape."

"As is usual between two anarchies," answered Gronski. "After all, this is a slight illustration."

Further conversation was stopped by the entrance of a servant who handed to Gronski a visiting card and he, glancing at it, said:

"Ask him to step in."

Afterwards he asked Ladislaus:

"Do you know Swidwicki?"

"I have heard the name, but am not acquainted with the man."

"He is a relative of Pani Otocka's deceased husband. A very peculiar figure."

At that moment Swidwicki entered the room. He was a man of forty years, bald, tall, lean, with an intelligent and sour face, and at the same time impudent. He was attired carelessly in a suit which appeared to fit him too loosely. He had, however, something which betrayed his connection with the higher social spheres.

"How is Swidwa?" Gronski began.

After which he introduced him to Ladislaus and continued:

"What has happened to you? I have not seen you for an age."

"Why, you were out of the city."

"Yes; but before that time you did not show up for a month."

"In my old age I have become an anchorite."

"Why?"

"Because I am wearied by the folly of men who pass for reasonable beings and by the malice of men who pose as good. Finally, I now roam all over the streets from morning until night. Ah! There exist 'Attic Nights,' 'Florentine Nights,' and I have a desire to write about 'Warsaw Days.' Delightful days! Titles of the separate chapters 'Hands up! The Rabble on Top.' 'Away with the Geese.' Do you know that at this moment there are so many troops patrolling the streets that any one else in my place would have been arrested ten times."

"I know, but how do you manage to avoid it?"

"I walk everywhere as peacefully as if in my own rooms. The way I do it is simple. As often as I am not drunk, I pretend to be drunk. You would not believe what sym-

pathy and respect an intoxicated person commands. And in my opinion this is but just, for whoever is 'under the influence' from morning till night is innocent and well thinking; upon him the so-called social order can rely with confidence."

"Surely. But the social order which depended upon such people would not stand upon steady legs."

"Who, to-day, does stand on steady legs? Doctrines intoxicate more than alcohol — therefore at this moment all are drunk. The empire is staggering, the revolution is reeling, the parties are floundering, and a third person stands on the side and looks on. Soon all will tumble to the ground. Then there will be order, and may it come as soon as possible."

"You ought to be that third person."

"The third person is the German and we are fools. We begin by falling to loggerheads, and have reached such a state that the only salvation for our social soul would be a decent civil war."

Here he became silent and after a while turned to Ladislaus.

"I see that your eyes are wide open, but nevertheless it is so. A civil war is a superb thing. Nothing like it to clarify the situation and purify the atmosphere. But to be led to such a situation and not to be able to create it is the acme of misfortune or folly."

"I confess that I do not understand," said Ladislaus.

Gronski motioned with his hand and remarked:

"Do not attempt to, for after every fifteen minutes of conversation you will not know what is black and what is white and your head will swim, or you will get a fever, which as a wounded man you should try to avoid."

"True," said Swidwicki, "I had heard and even read in some newspaper of the occurrence and paid close attention to it because in your home Pan Gronski and Pani

Otocka with her sister were being entertained. I am a relative of the late aged Otocka. Those women must have been scared. But if they think that they are safer here in the city they are mistaken."

"Judging from what can be seen, it is really no safer here. Have you seen those ladies yet?"

"No, I do not like to go there."

At this, Ladislaus, who by nature was impetuous and bold, frowned, and looking Swidwicki in the eyes, replied:

"I do not ask the reason, for that does not interest me, but I give you warning that they are my relatives."

"Whose cause a young knight would have to champion," answered Swidwicki, gazing at Ladislaus. "Ah, no! If I had any intention of saying anything against the ladies I would not say it, as Gronski would throw me down the stairs and I have a favor to ask of him. What I said is the highest praise for them and simply gall and wormwood for me."

"Beg pardon, again; I do not understand."

"For you see that for the average Pole to have respect for any one and not to be able to sharpen his teeth upon him is always annoying. I cannot speak of the ladies as I would wish, that is, disparagingly. I cannot endure ideal women; besides that, whenever it happens that I pass an evening with them, I become a more decent man and that is a luxury which in these times we cannot afford."

Ladislaus began to laugh and Gronski said:

"I told you that surely your head would swim."

After which to Swidwicki:

"If he should get any worse, I will induce him to send the doctor's and apothecary's bill to you."

"If that is the case, I will go," answered Swidwicki, "but you had better come with me into another room for I have some business with you which I prefer to discuss without witnesses."

And, taking leave of Ladislaus, he stepped out. Gronski accompanied him to the ante-room and after a while returned, shrugging his shoulders:

"What a strange gentleman," said Ladislaus. "I hope I am not indiscreet, but did he want to borrow any money from you?"

"Worse," answered Gronski. "This time it was a few Falk engravings. I positively refused as he most frequently returns money or rather he lets you take it out of his annuity, but books, engravings, and such things he never gives back."

"Is he making a collection?"

"On the contrary he throws or gives them away; loans or destroys them. Do I know? You will now have an opportunity of meeting him oftener, for though I refused to loan them, I permitted him to come here to look over and study them. He undoubtedly is writing a book about Falk."

"Ah, so he is a literary man."

"He might have been one. As you will meet him, I must warn you a little against him. I will describe him briefly. He is a man to whom the Lord gave a good name, a large estate, good looks, great ability, and a good heart, and he has succeeded in wasting them all."

"Even a good heart?"

"Inasmuch as he is a rather pernicious person, it is better that he does not write. For you see that it may happen that somebody's brains decay, just as with people, sick with consumption, their lungs decay. But no one has the right to feed the nation with the putrefaction of his lungs or his brains. And there are many like him. He does not act for the public weal but merely for his own private affairs. Do you know how he accounts for not accomplishing anything in his life? In this way: that to do so one must believe and to believe it is necessary

to have a certain amount of stupidity which he does not possess. I am not speaking now of religious matters. He simply does not believe that anything can be true or false, just or unjust, good or bad. But Balzac wisely says: 'Qui dit doute, dit impuissance.' Swidwicki is irritated and filled with bitterness by the fact that he is not anything; therefore he saves himself by paradoxes and turns intellectual somersaults. I once saw a clown who amused the public by giving his cap various strange and ridiculous shapes. Swidwicki does the same with truth and logic. He is also a clown, but an embittered and spiteful one. For this reason he always holds an opinion opposite to that of the person with whom he is speaking. This happens particularly when he is drunk, and he gets drunk every night. Then to a patriot he will say that fatherland is folly; in the presence of a believer he will scoff at faith; to a conservative he will say that only anarchy and revolution are worth anything; to the socialist that the proletariat have 'snouts.' I have heard how he thus expressed himself, and only for this reason, that he, 'a superman,' might have something to hit at when the notion seizes him. And thus it is always. In discussion he shines with paradoxes, but sometimes it chances that he says something striking because in all criticism there is some justice. If you wish, I will arrange such a spectacle, though for me he has a certain regard, firstly, because he likes me, and again because I have rendered him a few services in life. He promised to repay me with black ingratitude, but in the meantime he does not molest me with such energy as the others."

"And no one has yet broken his bones," observed Ladislaus.

"He does not, in the least, retreat from that. He himself seeks trouble and there is not a year in which he does not provoke some encounter."

"In the taverns?"

"Not only there. For belonging by name and family connections to the so called higher walks of life, he has many acquaintances there. Two years ago, indeed, the artists gave him a good cudgelling in a tavern; and, for instance, Dolhanski (their dislike is mutual) shot him last spring in a duel."

"Ah, that was when I heard his name; now I remember."

"Perhaps you heard it before, for previously he had a few affairs about women, as, in addition, he is a great ladies' man. Finally he is an unbridled rogue."

"As to women? or up to date?"

"He is not an old man. For some time he has been in the state where he likes not ladies but their maids. Fancy that not long ago he was so smitten with Miss Anney's maid, — the same brunette who nursed you a little in Jastrzeb, — that for a time he was continually dogging her steps. He said that once she reviled him on the stairway but this charmed him all the more."

Krzycki at the mention of the brunette who nursed him in Jastrzeb became so confused that Gronski noticed it, but not knowing what had passed between him and Pauline, judged that the enamoured youth was offended at the thought that such an individual as Swidwicki should bustle about Miss Anney. So desiring to remove the impression, he remarked:

"He says that he does not like to call upon those ladies, but Pani Otocka does not welcome him at all with enthusiasm. She receives him merely out of respect for the memory of her husband, who was his cousin and who, at one time, was the conservator of his estate. After all, it is probable that Swidwicki feels out of place among such ladies."

"For microbes do not love a pure atmosphere."

"This much is certain: there is within him 'a moral

insanity.' I have become accustomed to him, but there are certain things in him I cannot endure. You have no idea of the contemptuous pity, the dislike, and the downright hatred with which he expresses himself about everything which is Polish. And here I call a halt. Notwithstanding our good relations, it almost came to a personal encounter between us. For when he began to squirt his bilious wit, a certain night, on all Poland, I said to him, 'That lion is not yet dead, and if he dies we know who alone is capable of kicking at a dying lion.' He did not come here for over a month, but was I not right? I understand how some great hero, who was repaid with ingratitude, might speak with bitterness and venom of his country, but Swidwicki is not a Miltiades or a Themistocles. And such an outpouring of bile is directly pernicious, for he, with his immensely flashing intellect, finds imitators and creates a fashion, in consequence of which various persons who have never done anything for Poland whet their rusty wits upon this whetstone. I understand criticism, though it be inexorable, but when it becomes a horse or rather an ass from which one never dismounts, then it is bad, for it takes away the desire to live from those who, however, must live — and is vile, because it is spitting upon society, is often sinful and, above all, unprecedentedly unfortunate. Pessimism is not reason but a surrogate of reason; therefore, a cheat, such as the merchant who sells chiccory for coffee. And such a surrogate you now meet at every step in life and in literature."

Here Gronski became silent for a while and raised his brows; and Krzycki said:

"From what you say, I see that Swidwicki is a big ape."

"At times, I think that he is a man incredibly wretched, and for that reason I did not break off relations with him. Besides he has for me a kind of attachment and this always disarms one. Finally, I confess openly that I have the

purely Polish weakness, which indulges and forgives everything in people who amuse us. He at times is very amusing, especially when in a talking mood and when he is tipsy to a certain degree."

"But finally, if he does not work but talks, from what does he live?"

"He does not belong to the poor class. Once he was very wealthy; later he lost a greater portion of his fortune. But in the end the late Otocki who was a most upright man, and very practical besides, seeing what was taking place, took the matter in his own hands, saved considerable and changed the capital into an annuity. From this Swidwicki receives a few thousand roubles annually, and though he spends more than he ought to, he has something to live upon. If he did not drink, he would have a sufficiency: one passion he does not possess, namely, cards. He says that for cards one must have the intellect of a negro. From just that arose the encounter with Dolhanski. But after all, they could not bear each other of old. Both, as some one had said, are commercial travellers, dealing in cynicism and competing with each other."

"Between the two, I, however, prefer Dolhanski," said Krzycki.

"Because he amuses you, and Swidwicki has not thus far had the opportunity. Eternally, it is the same Polish weakness," answered Gronski.

After a while he added:

"In Dolhanski it is easier to see the bottom."

"And at that bottom, Panna Kajetana."

"At present it may, in truth, be so. Do you know that Dolhanski brought those ladies with him on the train which followed ours? He told me also that they would at once pay a visit to your mother and Pani Otocka."

"You will really call upon them to-day?"

"Yes, I call there daily. But as you are not permitted

to go out, I will invite the ladies to come here to-morrow afternoon for tea."

"I thank you most heartily. I am not allowed to go out but I could drive over."

"My servant told me that by order of the Party a strike of the hackdrivers will begin to-morrow morning."

"Then how can those ladies ride over here to-morrow? "

"In the private carriages. Unless they are forbidden to ride in private. —"

"In that case Mother will be unable to see me."

"If it is quiet upon the streets, I will conduct her here and escort her home. At times it is so that one day the streets are turbulent as the sea, and the next, still and deserted. In reality it is a relative security; for whoever goes out to-day in the city cannot feel certain that he will return. If not these then the others may stick in your side a knife or a bayonet. But for women it is comparatively safe."

"Under these circumstances, it would be better if my mother did not visit me at all. I prefer to stay out those three days which Szremski has imposed upon me, to exposing her or any of those ladies to peril. Please postpone that 'five o'clock.'"

"Perhaps it will be necessary to do that. But your mother will not consent to not seeing you for three days. Maybe some one else will importune me that I should not defer the party."

Ladislaus' face glowed with deep and tender joy.

"Tell Mother that worry about her may harm me and cause a fever, and tell that other one that I kiss the hem of her dress."

"No. Such things you must say yourself."

"Oh, that I could not only tell her that as soon as possible, but do it. In the meantime I have a favor to ask of you. Please send your servant to the city. If he is afraid

let him call a messenger. I would like to send that other one a few flowers."

"Then send also some to your cousins, as otherwise your mother will be prematurely surprised."

"Surely she would be astonished, for owing to her sickness she saw us so little together that she could not take in the situation. But soon I will confess all to her."

"I will only tell you what Pani Otocka said to me. She said this: 'Let Ladislaus not speak with his mother before his final interview with Aninka as otherwise he would be unable to tell her everything.'"

Krzycki looked Gronski quickly in the eyes.

"And do you not know what the matter is?"

"You know that I have never been accused of a lack of curiosity," answered Gronski, "but I judged that Pani Otocka has sufficient reasons for remaining silent, and, therefore, I did not question her about anything."

VII

GRONSKI actually did postpone his "five o'clock." Pani Krzycki, however, visited her son, sometimes twice in a day, claiming justly that less danger threatened an elderly woman than any one else. Ladislaus passed long hours with her, speaking about everything, but mostly about Miss Anney. After Gronski's admonition, he did not, indeed, confess to his mother his feelings for the young Englishwoman and did not mention a word about his intentions, but the fact, alone, that her name was continually on his lips, that he ascribed his preservation to her alone, and incessantly talked about the debt of gratitude which he and his family owed to her, gave his mother much to think about. The suspicion, which had flitted through her mind on the eve of their departure from Jastrzeb, returned and became more and more strongly fortified. She did not, indeed, take it for granted that Ladislaus had already taken an unbreakable resolution but came to the conclusion that he was "smitten" and finally that the light-haired maiden had made a greater impression upon him than had his cousin Otocka. This filled her with sorrow. During the journey and their few days' sojourn in Warsaw she took a fancy to Miss Anney for her demeanor, simplicity, and complaisance; but "Zosia Otocka" was the little eye in her head. From the moment she met her in Krynica, she never ceased dreaming of her for her son. She judged that, in respect to nobility and delicacy of sentiment, no one could compare with her. She regarded her as a chosen soul and the incarnation of womanly angelicalness. She had awaited her arrival with palpitation of the

heart, not supposing for a moment that Ladislaus would not be captivated by her figure, her sweet countenance, that maidenly charm, which, notwithstanding her widowhood, she preserved in full bloom. And until the end Pani Krzycki indulged in the hope that all would end according to her desires, not taking into account the fleeting impression in Jastrzeb; only during the journey to Warsaw and in the course of the last few days did she note that it might happen otherwise, and that Ladislaus' eyes were enraptured by another flower. She preferred, however, not to question him for she thought that it might yet pass away.

He, in the meantime, chafed as if imprisoned, and would undoubtedly have not observed those few days which the doctor stipulated, were it not for the fact that he had made a promise to his mother in Miss Anney's presence, and feared to create an opinion in her eyes that he was a man who did not keep his word. After the advice which Pani Otocka, through the instrumentality of Gronski, gave him that he should first speak with Miss Anney, it became more unendurable for him to sit in the house. From morning till night he racked his brain as to what that could be and could arrive at no satisfactory solution. The day following the conversation with Gronski, he decided to ask Pani Otocka about it by letter and sat down with great ardor to write. But after the first page he was encompassed by doubt. It seemed to him that he could not express that which he wished. He understood that, under the address of Pani Otocka, he was really writing to Miss Anney. So he yearned to make it a masterpiece, and in the meantime came to the conclusion that it was something so bungling and maladroit that it was impossible to forward it. Finally he lost all faith in his stylistic accomplishments, and this spoilt his humor so far that he again began to ask himself in his soul whether such "an ass,"

who is unable to indite three words, has the right to aspire to such an extraordinary and in every respect perfect being as "She." Gronski, however, comforted him with the explanation that the letter was not a success because from the beginning the project was baffling and under such circumstances no one could succeed. After which he also called his attention to another circumstance, namely, that from Pani Otocka's words and her advice that an interview with Miss Anney should precede any talk with his mother could be drawn the inference that there everything was prepared for an explosion, and all means preventative of a heart-break had been provided. Mirth immediately returned to Ladislaus and he began to laugh like a child and afterwards again sent to the three ladies bouquets of the most magnificent roses which Warsaw could provide.

The day concluded yet more propitiously, for proofs of appreciation arrived. They were brought to Gronski's house by Panna Pauly in the form of a small and perfumed note, on which was written by the hand of the light-haired divinity the following words: "We thank you for the beautiful roses and hope for an early meeting." Further came the signatures of Agnes Anney, Zosia Otocka, and Marynia Zbyltowska. Krzycki pronounced the letter a masterpiece of simplicity and eloquence. He certainly would have kissed each letter of it separately, were it not for the fact that before him stood Panna Pauly, with clouded face, and eyes firmly fixed upon him — uneasy and already full of suspicious jealousy, though obviously not knowing against which one of the three ladies it was to be directed. Krzycki, not concealing the joy which the letter gave him, turned to her and said:

"What is new, little Miss? Are the ladies well?"

"Yes. My mistress instructed me to inquire about your health."

"Kindly thank her. It is excellent, and if I am not shot again, I will not die from the first shooting."

And she, not taking her bottomless eyes off him, replied:

"God be praised."

"But that you, little Miss, should not fear to go out in such turbulent times!"

"The lackey was afraid, but I do not fear anything and wanted to see for myself how you were."

"There is a daring body for me! I am grateful to you, little Miss. Since this stupid strike of hackmen ended to-day, it is better for you to return by hack. Please accept this — for — "

While saying this, he began to search for his purse, and taking a five-rouble gold piece, he offered it to her. At the same time he felt that he was doing something improper, and even terrible. It was so disagreeable to him that he became confused and reddened, but it seemed to him that any other method of showing his gratitude would be food for the feeling which he perceived in her and which he wished to dispel, because of some strange kind of fear intensified even by the fact that the girl was Miss Anney's maid.

Therefore he began to repeat with a forced and slightly silly smile:

"Please, Panna Pauly, take it, please — "

But she withdrew her hand and her face darkened in a moment.

"I thank you," she said. "I did not come for that."

And she turned towards the door. To the dissatisfaction with himself which Krzycki felt was joined pity for her. Therefore he followed her a few steps.

"Let not the little lady be offended," he said; "here, of course, was no other thought than of her safety. It was only about this that I was concerned. Shall the servant summon a carriage? — "

But she did not answer and left the house. Krzycki, walking to the window, gazed for some time at her graceful form, disappearing in the depths of the street; and suddenly again appeared before his eyes the vision of the white statue in azure drops of water. There was, however, something exasperating in her; and unwillingly there occurred to the frail young gentleman the thought that if she were not Miss Anney's maid, and if he had known her formerly, that as two and two are four he would have succumbed to temptation.

But at present another, greater power had snatched away his thoughts and heart. After a while he returned to the letter and began to read it anew: "We thank you for the beautiful roses and hope for an early meeting." And so they want to see him over there. The day after to-morrow he will not be sitting here, bound by the chains of his own words, but will go there and gaze in those wonderful eyes, looking with a heavenly stream, and will so press his lips to her beloved hands that in one kiss he will tell everything which he has in his heart. Words will be later only an echo. And imagination bore him like an unmanageable horse. Perhaps that idolized maid may at once fall into his arms; perhaps she may close those wonderful eyes and offer her lips to him. At this thought a thrill passed through Krzycki from his feet to his head and it seemed to him that all the love, all the impulses, and all the desires which ever existed and exist in the world at present were hoarded in him alone.

VIII

GRONSKI spent the entire next day in the city; at night he was at Pani Otocka's, so that he did not return home until near midnight. Krzycki was not yet asleep and as his mother, on account of the disturbances on the streets could not visit him that day, he awaited with impatience Gronski's return, and immediately began to question him about the news in the city and of the ladies.

"The news in the city is bad," answered Gronski; "about noon I heard the firing of musketry in the factory district. Before calling upon Pani Otocka, I was at a meeting in the Philharmonic at which representatives of some of the warring factions met, and do you know what kind of an impression I took away with me? Why, that, unfortunately, Swidwicki in certain respects was right and that we have come to the pass where only a civil war can clear the atmosphere. In this would be the greater tragedy for it would, at the same time, be the final extinction. But of this later. I have a head so tired and nerves so shattered that to-day I cannot think of such things."

Here he rang for the servant, and notwithstanding the late hour directed him to prepare tea. Then he continued:

"But from Pani Otocka I bring news. You would not believe your ears when I tell you what happened. Why this afternoon, before my arrival, Laskowicz called on those ladies."

Krzycki dropped from his hand the cigar which he was smoking.

"Laskowicz?" he asked.

"Yes."

"But the police are looking for him."

"They are looking for him in the country and not in Warsaw. The police, like all the rest, have lost their heads. After all, it is easier to hide in a large city. But, really, if he himself flew into their hands, they might clutch him."

"But what did he want from Pani Otocka?"

"According to my conjectures, he wanted to see Marynia, but came ostensibly for a contribution for revolutionary purposes. After all, they are now continually soliciting contributions."

"And did the ladies give?"

"No. They told him that they would not give anything for the revolution, and for the hungry and those deprived of employment they had already sent as much as they could to a newspaper office. In fact, this was the truth. Pani Otocka donated a considerable amount, and Miss Anney also. Laskowicz attempted to explain to them that a refusal would expose the refractory to dangers and for that reason he came to them personally to shield them from it. He was very much displeased and incensed, particularly as he saw only Pani Zosia and Miss Anney, for Marynia did not appear. He announced however that he would come again."

"Let him try!" cried Ladislaus, clenching his fists.

But afterwards he asked with surprise:

"How did he get in there, and why did they receive him?"

"The male servants throughout the whole city are terror-stricken and the words 'From the Party' everywhere open the doors like the best pick-lock. But Laskowicz did not have to use even these means, as it happened that Pani Otocka's footman was in the cellar and he was ad-

mitted by Miss Anney's maid, who knew him from Jastrzeb and thought that he came as a good acquaintance."

"In any case she acquitted herself foolishly."

"My dear sir, what could she know about him? Of course, no one told her what he was and she saw him among us; she saw how he rode away to the city with me and that he was the tutor of the younger members of your family. That he participated in the attack upon you, also, could not have occurred to her mind, for from our side that is only a supposition which we did not confide to the ladies, in order not to disquiet them, and much less to her."

"Perhaps she herself is a socialist."

"I doubt it, for after the attempt, hearing that you were wounded, it is said she wailed so bitterly that she could be heard all over Jastrzeb; she invoked all the punishments of hades upon your would-be assassins. Miss Anney was much affected by that. I remember also that when it was rumored that the Rzeslew people did it, she vowed to set fire to Rzeslewo. Ah, you always have luck — "

"I do not care for such luck. But as to Laskowicz she, of course, saw during the search at Jastrzeb that they were seeking him."

"Well, what of it? Were you not persecuted for establishing a school? In this country all sympathy is always on the side of the fugitive. Imagine for yourself that when Miss Anney forbade her to admit Laskowicz any more, she became indignant. Evidently it seemed to her that Miss Anney did that from fear of the police."

"Miss Anney gave indisputable proofs that she does not fear anything."

"So I also do not suspect her of fear, nor Pani Otocka. But, instead, I confess to you what I fear. That madman, if he does not personally appear there, will hover about them, and what is more will write letters; all letters

now travel undoubtedly through the black cabinets. If I knew where I could find him, I would warn him above all things not to dare to write any more."

"I will warn him of that and something else, if I can only meet him."

"Since he visited the ladies, he may come to see me. We had, while riding together from Jastrzeb, a discussion which he has not forgiven me."

"If he comes here, do you give me carte blanche?"

"I would not think of it. Previously I had propounded to you the question whether if, as a result of a personal encounter with you, he was arrested you could take upon your soul his destruction, and you answered 'No.' Now I will ask you differently: If Laskowicz, tracked and pursued as a wild animal, hid in your house, would you not endeavor to hide him or assist him in escaping?"

To this Krzycki replied in anger, but without hesitation:

"I would help him — the dog's blood."

"Ah, you see!" observed Gronski. "You curse, but admit. If they come to me for a contribution — it is all the same whether with or without Laskowicz — I will tell them that I will give for people destitute of bread but will not give for bombs, dynamite, and strike propaganda. I will tell them more: that in collecting contributions for a revolution from people who do not want to give and who give only from fear, they degrade their own citizens."

"Perhaps that is of import to them. The more the higher strata become cowardly, the easier it will be for them."

"That may be, but in such case they are the full brethren of all those who purposely and of old have debased the community."

And Krzycki pondered and said:

"With us these things are often done — from above and from below."

Gronski glanced at him with a certain surprise as if he did not expect from his lips such a remark.

"You are right," he declared; "from above, a continual lowering of great ideals, from below, because at present they are being directly trampled upon."

"Bah! There remain yet the solid multitude of country peasantry."

"Again you are right," replied Gronski. "Formerly Dabrowski's March[1] was the watchword for a hundred thousand, to-day it is the watchword for ten millions. Blessed be folk-lore!"

They remained silent. Gronski for a time walked about the room, taking, according to his custom, the eyeglasses off his nose and replacing them. After which, he said:

"Do you know what surprises me? This: that in such times and under such conditions, people can think of their private happiness and their private affairs. But nevertheless such is the law of life, which no power can suppress."

"Have you me in mind?"

"In theory, I am verifying a fact which in practice even you confirm. For lo, at this moment it is as if an earthquake took place; the buildings tumble, people perish, subterranean fires burst forth and you and Miss Anney love each other and think of founding a new nest."

"How did you say it?" Krzycki asked with radiant countenance, "'you love each other.'"

"I said 'you love each other,' for such is the case. You, after all, are more in love than she."

"Certainly," answered Ladislaus, "there is nothing strange in that; but what inference do you draw?"

"This, which you have not heretofore either directly or indirectly asked and have not even tried to ascertain,

[1] "Poland is not yet lost."

namely, how much can Miss Anney bring to you. In a rural citizen this is proof that the thermometer shows the highest temperature of love."

"I give you my word, I would take her in a single dress," answered Krzycki.

"But you would rather she had something?"

"I will answer sincerely that I would. There are many neighbors poorer than I am and a piece of bread will never be lacking to us. But at Jastrzeb there are three of us — counting Mother, four. I am heir of one-fourth and the unsalaried manager of the three-fourths belonging to my family and Mother. I would wish that Jastrzeb would solely belong to myself and my wife, and in succession to my children, if we have any."

"As to that, I have no doubt; but as to a dowry, I am not tormented by unnecessary fears," said Gronski. "Miss Anney lives, travels, dresses, and resides in comfort, but she is not a person who would desire to create false impressions. I assume that she does not possess millions, but her fortune, particularly in comparison to our condition, may appear even more considerable than we might have thought."

"Let her have it or not have it," exclaimed Krzycki, "if she only will give herself to me. Whoever possesses that jewel can be crowned with it like a king."

"I foresee a coronation soon," replied Gronski, laughing.

IX

On account of Marynia's birthday, Miss Anney with her maid went to buy flowers. The day before, Gronski told her that he saw in one of the stores Italian rosy lilies, such as are sold in whole bundles in the vicinity of Lucca and Pisa, but which are cultivated but little in the conservatories of Warsaw and seldom imported into the country. As Marynia had inquired about them with great curiosity, Miss Anney decided to purchase for her all that could be found in the store. The previous evening she bantered Gronski, telling him that she would forestall him in the purchase, for he, as a known sleepy-head, would be unable to leave his home early enough. Determined to play a joke upon him, she left the house at eight in the morning, so as to be present at the opening of the store. She had, besides, a letter prepared, with the words "They are already bought," which she intended to send to Gronski by Pauly, and exulted at the thought that Gronski would receive it at his morning coffee.

In fact everything went according to her plans, for she was the first buyer at the store. She was disappointed only in this: that there were too few lilies. There was only one flower-pot, containing about a dozen stalks with flowers. So the decoration of Marynia's whole room with them was out of the question. But for just this reason Miss Anney eagerly bought the one sample and, paying the price asked for it, directed that it be sent to the Otocka residence. She was annoyed, however, when informed in the store that the gardener delivering flowers could not

come until noon-time, for she desired that Marynia should have them before she rose from bed.

"In that case," she said, turning to Pauly, "call a hack and we will take the flower-pot with us."

But Pauly, who, though she behaved quite indifferently and even refractorily in respect to her mistress and also to Pani Otocka, had a sort of exceptional adoration, bordering on sympathy, for Marynia, replied:

"Let Madame permit me to carry these flowers alone. In the hack they will be shaken up and may fall off."

"But you are to go with the letter to Pan Gronski and, besides, you will tire yourself with the flower-pot."

"Pan Gronski's residence is on the way; and what if I do tire myself a little for the golden little lady. May I not do that much for her?"

Miss Anney understood that a refusal would cause her great vexation, therefore she said:

"Very well. You are an honest soul. But if it should be too heavy for you, take a hack. I will go to church."

And she went to church to pray for Ladislaus, who was that day to leave the house for the first time and pass the evening at Pani Otocka's, owing to Marynia's birthday. She expected that the following day he would visit her and she wanted also to commit that day to divine protection.

Pauline, taking the lilies, went in an opposite direction towards Gronski's residence. After a few score of steps the flower-pot filled with earth began to grow heavy; so, shifting it from one arm to the other, she thought:

"If it was for any one else, I would throw everything upon the ground, but she is such a bird that it is hard not to love her — I would carry for her even two such flower-pots and I would not do her any harm. — Even in case — he loved her alone."

And at this gloomy thought her countenance darkened yet more. In her heart, capable only of extreme feelings, began a struggle between her strange adoration for Marynia and her blind and passionate love for Krzycki; it was accompanied by the terrible and hopeless consciousness that under no circumstance could he be hers, as he was a young lord, heir, almost prince royal, and she a simple girl for sewing, setting the parlor in order, and household work. To this was added immediately a feeling of a prodigious wrong. Why, she might have been born also a "little lady" and not brought up in an orphan asylum, under the care of sisters of charity, but in a rich lordly home. Why was it not so, instead of the vile work of the servant's station awaiting her till death?

And here it occurred to her mind that there is now, however, a kind of people, a kind of "party," which wants to take away property from the rich, distribute it among the poor, level all people, so that there will be no rich men and paupers, no servants and lords, no wrong of any kind in the world; and in the place thereof, all ranks will be one and the same, and liberty will be identical. She had heard of this from the servants in the house, from the craftsmen, from the salesmen in the stores to which she went to make purchases, and also through overhearing the conversations of the "gentility." It surprised her that these people were called socialists, for heretofore a "socialist" and a madman roaming over the streets with knife in hand meant to her one and the same thing. For a time after the attack upon Krzycki, when the report was spread that the socialists did it, she even felt for them such furious and blind hatred that she was willing to poison them or bake them upon live fires. Later, when the servants in Jastrzeb began to repeat that the young heir was waylaid not by them, but by people of Rzeslewo, this hatred became extinguished. But subsequently, when the girl learned more accurately what

the socialists aimed at and who they were, she was but little interested in them. She partly regarded their ideas as foolish and partly thought of other things more personal, and finally, she distinguished in Poland only "her own" and "not her own," loving, not knowing why, the first, and hating indiscriminately all the others. It was not until the last few days that it began to dawn in her head that among her own there existed terrible and painful differences; that for some there was wealth, for others poverty; that for a few there was enjoyment and for others toil; for some, laughter, for others, tears; for some, happiness, for others, woe and injury.

This became clear to her, particularly at that moment when with greater suffering than ever before she became aware that this young gentleman, to whom her soul and body were urged, was simply an inaccessible star, on which she was barely permitted to gaze. And although nothing had happened that day which particularly irritated her and nothing had altered, she was possessed by a despair such as she never felt before.

But the course of her gloomy meditations was finally interrupted by an external incident. Notwithstanding the early hour, she observed on the corner of the precinct a large crowd of people, agitated by some uneasiness. Their faces were turned towards the depth of a cross street, as if something unusual was taking place there. Some rushed forward while others retreated with evident fear. Some, arguing heatedly and pointing at something with their hands, looked upwards to the roofs of the houses. From all directions flocked new crowds of workingmen and striplings. Among the hack-drivers standing on the corner an unusual commotion prevailed: the drivers, in groups of varying numbers, wheeled their horses about in different directions as though they wished to blockade the street. Suddenly shrill cries resounded and then shots. In one

moment an indescribable confusion arose. The throng swung to and fro and began to scamper; the cries sounded shriller and shriller each moment. It was evident that they were pursuing somebody. The girl, with her lilies, stood as if thunderstruck, not knowing what to do. Then, suddenly from amidst the hacks, a man dashed out, bent forward with lowered head, and at full speed ran towards her. On the way he flung away his cap and snatched a hat from the head of a stripling who, understanding the situation in the twinkle of an eye, did not even quiver. The hack-drivers began yet more zealously to block the street, evidently with a view to make the pursuit more difficult. But right behind them again rattled the revolver shots, and amidst the general cries and tumult already could be heard the shrill sounds of the police whistles and the hoarse, bellowing shouts of "Catch him! catch him!" A blind, excessive fright now seized Pauly, and she began to run, squeezing unconsciously to her bosom the flower-pot with the lilies, as if she wanted to save her own child.

But she had barely run a dozen or more steps when a panting, low voice began to cry close behind her:

"Lady, give me the flowers! For the mercy of God, lady, give me the flowers! Save!"

The girl turned about suddenly with consternation, and indescribable amazement was reflected in her eyes, for she recognized Laskowicz.

He, having violently wrested from her the flower-pot, to which, not knowing what she was doing, she clung with all her strength, whispered further:

"Perhaps they will not recognize me. I will tell them that I am a gardener. Save me, little lady! Perhaps they will not recognize. I am out of breath!"

She wanted to run farther but he restrained her.

In the meantime, from among the chaos of hacks, a

dozen or more policemen and civil agents emerged. The majority of the mob moved at a running pace in a direction opposite to the one in which Laskowicz and the girl were going, and undoubtedly they intentionally moved that way in order to deceive the pursuers. To better hoodwink the police, cries of "Catch him!" resounded among the laborers. Some workingman began to whistle shrilly on his fingers, imitating the sound of a police whistle. Accordingly the policemen and agents plunged headlong after the dense mob. At the intersection of the streets only a few stood still, and these, after a moment's irresolution, set off in the other direction, but they ran at full speed by the girl and the man with the light hat, carrying flowers. Rushing ahead they seized a few workingmen, but other workingmen rescued them in a moment. Pauly and Laskowicz walked farther.

"They missed me," said the student. "Here no one would betray. They missed! Those flowers and another's hat fooled them. I thank you, little lady; I thank you from my whole soul, and until my death I will never be able to sufficiently repay you."

But she, not having yet entirely recovered from her amazement, began to ask:

"What happened? Where did you come from?"

"From the roof; they pounced upon us in a printing plant. The others will get a year or two and nothing more will happen to them — but for me, there would be the halter."

"How did you manage to escape?"

"When we got on the roof, I slid down the gutter-pipe. I might have broken my neck. It was not until I reached the street that they observed me. They fired shots at me, but luckily I was not hit, for the blood would have betrayed me. Whoever was alive helped me, and I was hidden by the hacks. They did not see how I changed

a cap for a hat. But if it was not for my female associate it would have been all over with me."

"What female associate?"

"I speak of you, little lady, thus. Amongst us such is the custom."

"Then do not call me that, for I am no female associate."

"That is a pity. But this is not the time to speak of that. Once more I thank you for the rescue, though it is for a short time."

"Why for a short time?"

"Because I do not know what to do with myself, where to go, and where to hide. Every night I sleep in a different place but they are seeking for me everywhere."

"That is true. They were searching for you in Jastrzeb. Do you know that there was a police-search there?"

"Was there?"

"Yes. Gendarmes, police, and soldiers came. They almost put everybody under arrest."

"Oh, they would not arrest them —"

The clatter of horses' hoofs and the rattle of the horse-shoes over the stony pavements interrupted for a while their conversation. From a side street ahead rode out a Cossack patrol, consisting of several scores of men. They rode slowly, with carabines resting upon their thighs and looked about cautiously. At the sight of them, Pauly became somewhat pale, while Laskowicz began to whisper:

"That is nothing. They see that I am carrying flowers from the store. They will take me for a gardener and will ride by."

In fact they did pass by.

"They are now arresting every moment people on the streets in whole crowds," said Laskowicz. "To some one else that would be a small matter; but if I once fall into their clutches, I will never be able to get out again."

"Well, what do you intend to do?"

"Carry these flowers for you, little lady."

"And after that?"

"I do not know."

"Of course you must have some acquaintances who will hide you."

"I have, I have! But the police have their eyes upon all my acquaintances. Every night there is a search. For the last two nights I slept in a printing establishment, but to-day they discovered the printing press."

A moment of silence followed.

After which Laskowicz again spoke in a gloomy voice:

"There is now no help for me. I will deliver these flowers and go wherever my eyes will take me."

But in the heart of the girl suddenly there awoke a great pity for him. Before that she was indifferent to him. At present she only saw in him a Polish student hunted, like a mad dog, by people whom she of old despised.

Therefore on her energetic and obstinate countenance, inflexible determination was depicted.

"Come what may, I will not desert you," she said, knitting her dark brows.

Laskowicz was suddenly seized with a desire to kiss her hand and would have done so if they were not on the street. He was moved not only by the hope of escape, but also by the fact that this girl, who hardly knew him, who did not belong to his camp, was ready to expose herself to the greatest dangers in order to come to his aid.

"What can the little lady do? Where will she hide me?" he asked quietly.

But she walked on with brows knitted by the strain of continuous thinking, and finally said:

"I know. Let us go."

He shifted the flower-pot to the left hand. "I must tell you," he said with lowered voice, "that the least punishment for concealing me is Siberia. I must tell you that!

And I might cause your destruction, but in the first moments — the little lady understands — the instinct of preservation — there was no time for reflection."

The little lady did not very well understand what the instinct of preservation was, but instead understood something else. This was that if she brought him, as she intended, to Gronski's, she would expose to danger not only Gronski but also Krzycki.

And under the influence of this thought she stood as if stupefied.

"In such a case, I do not know what I can do," she said.

"Ah, you see, little lady," answered the student, as if in sorrow, while she, on her part, again began to rack her brains. It never occurred to her to conduct Laskowicz to Miss Anney's or Pani Otocka's. She felt that here masculine help was necessary and that it was imperative to find some one who would not fear and for whom she, herself, did not care. Therefore she mentally reviewed the whole array of Miss Anney's and Pani Otocka's acquaintances. — Pan Dolhanski? No! — He might be afraid or else send them to the devil and sneer at them. Dr. Szremski? He had probably left the city. Ah, were it not for this "young lord" she would conduct this poor fellow to Pan Gronski, for even if he did not receive him, at the worst he would give good advice, or would direct them to somebody. And suddenly it came to her mind that if Siberia threatened the person who concealed Laskowicz, Pan Gronski would not direct them to anybody; but if he could, he would direct them to only one man, whom she also knew. And on this thought, she dusted her dress with her hands and, turning to Laskowicz, said:

"I know now! Let us try."

After which, standing for a while, she continued:

"Let us enter this house, here, at once. You will wait with the flowers in the hallway and I will deliver the letter

upstairs and return. Do not fear anything, for the door-keeper here knows me and he is a good man. After that I may lead you somewhere."

Saying this, she entered the gate and, leaving Laskowicz below, rang, after a moment, Gronski's bell.

Gronski, rising that day earlier than usual, was already dressed and sat with Krzycki having tea. When Pauly handed him the letter, he read it and, laughing, showed it to Ladislaus; after which he rose and went to his writing desk to write an answer. During this time Ladislaus began to question her about the health of his mother and the younger ladies.

"I thank you, the ladies are well, but my lady has already gone down town."

"So early? And is not your lady afraid to go alone about the city?"

"My lady went with me and bought flowers for Panna Marynia and after that she went to church."

"To what church did she go?"

"I do not know."

Panna Pauly knew well, but she was hurt by his asking her about her mistress; while he, conjecturing this, ceased to question her further, for he had previously resolved to converse with her as little as possible.

So, silence — a little embarrassing — ensued between them, and continued until Gronski returned with the letter.

"Here is the answer," he said; "let the little lady bow for us to the ladies and say that to-day we both will be there, for Pan Krzycki's imprisonment is now ended."

"I thank you," replied Pauly, "but I have yet a favor, — I would like to learn the address of Pan Swidwicki?"

Gronski looked at her with astonishment.

"Did the ladies request you to ask?"

"No — I just wanted to know — "

"Panna Pauly," said Gronski, "Pan Swidwicki lives at No. 5 Oboznej, but it is not very safe for young girls to go to him."

She colored to the ears from fear that the "young lord" might think something bad about her.

And she hesitated for a while whether she should tell that Laskowicz was in the hallway and that it was necessary to hide him, as otherwise destruction awaited him. But again she recollected that Laskowicz had been sought in Jastrzeb and that Krzycki, on account of that had been almost arrested. A fear possessed her that perhaps Gronski himself might want to hide the student and in such case would jeopardize the young lord. She looked once or twice at the shapely form of Krzycki and decided to remain silent.

But Gronski spoke further:

"I do not advise you to go to him. I do not advise it. It is said that you once gave him a tongue-lashing."

And she, raising her head, answered at once haughtily and indignantly:

"Then I will give him a tongue-lashing a second time; but I have some business with him."

And bowing, she left. Gronski shrugged his shoulders and said:

"I cannot understand what she is concerned about. There is something strange in that girl, and I tell you that your future lady gives evidence of holy patience, that she has not dismissed her before this. She always says that she is a violent character but has a golden heart, and that may be possible. I know, however, from Pani Otocka that the golden heart enacts for her such scenes as no one else would tolerate."

X

In the evening of Marynia's birthday, Ladislaus and Miss Anney for a time found themselves at some distance from the rest of the company, at a cottage piano, decorated with flowers. His eyes shone with joy and happiness. He felt fortunate that his imprisonment had ended and that he could again gaze upon this, his lady, whom he loved with the whole strength of a young heart.

"I know," he told her, "that you were this morning in the city and bought flowers. I learned this from your maid, who brought the letter to Pan Gronski. Afterwards you went to church. I asked her to which one, as I wanted to go there, but the maid did not know."

"That is strange, for she knows that I always go to the Holy Cross, and at times I even take her with me. I am there, daily, at the morning mass."

"She told me that she did not know," answered Ladislaus. "Will you be there to-morrow?"

"Yes; unless the weather should be very inclement."

Ladislaus lowered his voice:

"I ask because I have a great and heartfelt prayer. Permit me to come there at the same hour and before the same altar."

Blushes suffused Miss Anney's countenance and her breast began to move more quickly. She inclined her head somewhat and placing the edge of the fan to her lips answered in a low voice:

"I have not the right to forbid nor to permit. The church is open to all the pious."

"Yes. But I want to kneel a while beside you —

together, and not with customary humility; but for a special purpose. As to my piety, I will candidly state that I believe in God, ah! especially now — I believe in God and in His goodness; but heretofore I have not been very pious — just like all others. When, however, a whole life is concerned, then even a man, totally unbelieving, is ready to kneel and pray. To kneel beside you, that alone is an immense boon, for it is as if one had beside him an angel. And I want to beg for something else: and that is that we should together, at the same time, say 'Under Thy protection we flee, Holy Mother of God.'"

Ladislaus became pale from emotion and on his forehead beads of perspiration appeared. For a time he remained silent, to permit the too violent beating of his heart to subside. After which he again spoke:

"'We flee' — that will mean us both. Nothing more, dear, dearest lady, nothing more. After that I will go, and in the afternoon, if you permit, I will come to your residence and will tell you everything which has collected within me from the time I first saw you in Jastrzeb. In your hands, lady, lies my fate, but I must, I must divulge it all; otherwise my bosom will burst. But if you, lady, will agree to a joint prayer of 'Under Thy protection,' before that time, then I shall be so happy that I do not know how I will survive until to-morrow."

And she looked at him guilelessly and straight in his eyes with the celestial streak of the hazy pupils of her eyes and answered:

"Come to church to-morrow."

And Ladislaus whispered:

"And not to be able to fall at your feet at this moment — not to be able to fall at your feet!"

But Miss Anney tapped lightly, as if reluctantly, his hand, resting on the piano with her own, which was incased in a white glove, and walked away, for, not forgetting

herself to the same extent as Ladislaus, she noticed that they were observed. Owing to Marynia's birthday there assembled that evening at Pani Otocka's quite a considerable gathering of acquaintances. The notary, Dzwonkowski, appeared; also, an old neighbor from the vicinity of Zalesin; and besides these Dolhanski and both Wlocek ladies, who after a previous exchange of visits, were invited by Pani Otocka. Gronski actually appeared the earliest and well nigh played the rôle of host, in which part he was assisted by the former teacher of Marynia, the violinist Bochener, not less in love with her, and finally Swidwicki, who on that day was exceptionally sober. Pani Otocka was occupied with the Wlocek ladies; Gronski conversed with Swidwicki in so far as he did not direct his eyes after Marynia, who, in her white dress, adorned with violets, slender, almost lithesome, actually looked like an alabaster statuette. But she, and with her Pani Krzycki, began to look with especial attention at Ladislaus and Miss Anney. The little ears of Marynia reddened from curiosity, while on Pani Krzycki's countenance there appeared uneasiness, and, as if it were, a shadow of dissatisfaction.

But Miss Anney, breaking off her conversation with Ladislaus, approached directly towards his mother and sat down in a chair beside her.

"Pan Ladislaus is so happy," she said, "that his confinement is ended."

"I see," answered Pani Krzycki, "but I fear that conversation fatigues him yet. What did he say to you with such animation?"

For a moment, Miss Anney inclined her head and began to smooth out with her fingers the folds of her bright dress as if troubled, but later, having evidently formed a sudden resolution, she raised her frank eyes straight at Pani Krzycki, just as she had previously at Ladislaus, and replied:

"He said such pleasant and loving things; that he wants to go to church to-morrow and say 'Under Thy protection' — together with me — "

In her eyes there were no interrogatories, nor uneasiness, nor challenge, but great goodness and truth.

Pani Krzycki, on the other hand, was put out of countenance by the candor of the reply, so that at first she was silent. It seemed to her that what heretofore was a doubtful, blurred, and indistinct supposition, lightened up and plainly emerged upon the surface, but she tried to disbelieve it; so, after a certain hesitation, she replied:

"Laudie otherwise would be ungrateful. He owes you so much — and I also."

Miss Anney understood perfectly that Pani Krzycki wanted to give her to understand that the motive of Ladislaus' words was only gratitude, but she had no time to reply to the remark, as at that time across the arm of her chair the slender form of Marynia was leaning:

"Aninka, may I trouble you to step over here for a moment?"

"Certainly," answered Miss Anney.

And rising, she left. Pani Krzycki eyed her and sighed. There was in that beautiful form so much youth, health, radiance, so many golden tresses, glances, so much bloom, warmth, and womanly fascination, that an older and experienced woman, like Pani Krzycki, was forced to admit in her soul that it would have been rather incomprehensible if Ladislaus had remained indifferent to all those charms.

And sighing for the second time, she thought:

"Why did Zosia bring her to Jastrzeb?"

And she began to seek with her eyes Pani Otocka, who at that moment was approaching the door to greet an elderly gentleman with a white leonine mane and the same kind of white beard who, evidently being almost blind,

stood on the threshold and gazed over the salon through his gold-rimmed spectacles.

Finally espying Pani Otocka, he seized both her hands and commenced to kiss them with great ardor, while she greeted him with that shy grace, peculiarly her own, which made her resemble a young village maid.

"How sweet she is and how lovable!" Pani Krzycki said to herself.

But her further meditations and regrets were interrupted by Swidwicki, who, taking the chair vacated by Miss Anney, said:

"But your son, benefactress, is a genuine Uhlan from under Somo-Sierra. What a race! what a type! I, who everywhere fancy beauty as a setter does partridges, observed this at once to Gronski. Only put a sabre in his hand and place him on horseback. Or at some exhibition! plainly on exhibition, as a notable specimen of the race. Ah, what blood with milk! The women must rave over him!"

Pani Krzycki, notwithstanding her internal worries, was pleased to hear these words, for Ladislaus' shapeliness was from his childhood days a source of pride and joy for her. But in reality, she did not deem it proper to admit this before Swidwicki.

"I do not attach any importance to that," she answered, "and I thank God that it is not the only thing that can be said of my son."

And Swidwicki snapped his fingers and said:

"You do attach importance to it, madame, you do, and so do I, and those ladies only pretend that they do not — that young Englishwoman as well as even that translucent little porcelain maid; though apparently she thinks of nought but music. . . . Perhaps the least of all Pani Zosia, but only because from a certain time she too sedulously reads Plato."

"Zosia — Plato!" exclaimed Pani Krzycki.

"I suspect so, and even am certain for otherwise she would not be so Platonic."

"Why, she is not versed in Greek."

"But Gronski is, and he can translate for her."

Pani Krzycki gazed with astonishment at Swidwicki and broke off the conversation. Becoming acquainted with him only that evening and having no idea that he was a man who, for a quip, for a wretched play on words and from habit, was ready always and everywhere to talk stuff and nonsense in the most reckless manner, she could not understand why he said that to her. Nevertheless his words were for her, as it were, a ray illuminating things which heretofore she had not observed. She found new proofs that her heartfelt and secret wishes would always remain a dream without substance — and she sighed for the third time.

"Ah, then it is so," she thought to herself in her soul.

"Yes, yes," Swidwicki continued. "My cousin is very Platonic and in addition a trifle anæmic."

In his laughter there was a kind of bitterness and even malice, so that Pani Krzycki again looked at him with astonishment.

In the meantime Marynia led Miss Anney to another chamber. Her ears each moment became redder and her eyes sparkled with a perfectly childish curiosity. So pressing her little nose to Miss Anney's cheek, she began to whisper:

"Tell me! Did he propose to you at the piano? Did he propose? Tell me now."

And Miss Anney, embraced her neck with her arms and kissing her cordially, whispered in her ear:

"Almost."

"What? — at the piano! I guessed it at once! Ho, ho! I am thoroughly conversant with such matters. But how was that? Almost? How, almost?"

"For I know that he loves me—"

"Laudie? What did he say to you?"

"He did not even have to say it."

"I understand, I understand perfectly."

Miss Anney, though her eyes were moist, began to laugh, and, hugging the little violinist again, said:

"Let us now return to the salon."

"Let us return," answered Marynia.

On the way she said with delighted countenance:

"You and Zosia, thought that I saw nothing, and I — oho!"

In the salon they chanced upon a political discussion. The tall elderly gentleman with the white mane, who was a colleague and friend of the late Otocki and at the same time editor of one of the principal dailies in Warsaw, said:

" They think that this is a new state of affairs, which henceforth is bound to continue, but it is an attack of hysteria, after which exhaustion and prostration will follow. I have lived long in the world and often have witnessed similar phenomena. Yes, it is so. It is a stupid and wicked revolution."

If Swidwicki had heard from some madman that this was a wise and salutary revolution, he undoubtedly would have been of the opinion of the old editor, but, as he esteemed lightly journalists in general, he was particularly angered at the thought that the amiable old gentleman passed in certain circles as a political authority; so he began at once to dispute.

"Only the bottomless naïvete of the conservatives," he said, "is capable of demanding from a revolution reason and goodness. It is the same as demanding, for instance, of a conflagration that it should be gentle and sensible. Every revolution is the child of the passions — unreason and rage — and not of love. Its aim is to blow up the old forms of folly and evil and forcibly introduce into life the new."

"And how do you picture to yourself the new?"

"In reality as also foolish and wicked — but new. Upon such transitions our history is based, and even the annals of mankind in general."

"That is the philosophy of despair."

"Or of laughter."

"If of laughter, then it is egoism."

"Yes, that is so. My partisanship begins with me and ends with me."

Gronski impatiently smacked his lips; while the editor took off his spectacles and, winking with his eyes, began to wipe them with a handkerchief.

"I beg pardon," he said with great phlegm. "Your party affiliations may be very interesting but I wanted to speak of others."

"Less interesting — "

But the old journalist turned to Gronski.

"Our socialists," he said, "have undertaken the reconstruction of a new house, forgetting that we live huddled together in only a few rooms, and that in the others dwell strangers who will not assent to it; or rather, on the contrary, they will permit the demolition of those few rooms, but will not allow their reconstruction."

"Then it is better to blow up the whole structure with dynamite," interjected Swidwicki.

But this remark was passed over in silence; after which Gronski said:

"One thing directly astonishes me, and that is that the conservatives turn with the greatest rage not against the revolutionists, but against the national patriots, who do not desire a revolution and who alone have sufficient strength to prevent it. I understand that a foreign bureaucracy does this, but why should our patres conscripti clear the way in this for them?"

The editor replaced the spectacles, wetted his finger in

the tea seeking the cup, afterwards raised it to his lips, drank, and replied:

"The reason of that is their greater blindness and sense."

"Please explain!" exclaimed Swidwicki, who was a little impressed by this reply.

And the neighbor from Zalesin, who eagerly listened to the words of the journalist, asked:

"How is that, sir benefactor? I do not understand."

"Yes, it is so," answered the editor. "Their greater blindness is due to the narrower horizon, to the lack of ability to look ahead into the future, into those times and ages which are yet to come, for which it is a hundred times more important that the great Sacred Fire [1] should not be extinguished than that any immediate paltry benefits should be obtained. It is necessary to have a sense of coming events, and this they do not possess. They are a little like Esau who relinquished his heritage for a pot of lentils. And for us it is not allowable to relinquish anything. Absolutely nothing! On the other hand, when concerned about isolated moments, about ranks and connections in a given instant of time, the conservatives are a hundred times more sensible, adroit — commit far less errors in details and view matters more soberly. I speak of this with entire impartiality for I myself am a non-partisan."

"Who is right neither in the present time nor will be in the future," interposed Swidwicki. "After all, I agree that the difference between the views of politicians favoring reconciliation and sentimental patriots and zealots in general lies in this, that from political moderation you can immediately coin money, though at times counterfeit, but from sentimental politics, — only in the future. History confirms at every stage that what one hundred, fifty,

[1] Referring to the Sacred Fire of pagan Lithuanians.

or twenty years ago appeared to be political or social insanity, to-day has entered into being. And it will be ever thus in the further course of time."

"That may be," said Gronski, "but it is only just so far as radicalism of ideas or the furies of feeling do not strike terror in a great, stupid, immediate act. For if this occurs a crime is perpetrated, and error is born which menaces the future. This happens frequently."

"And I assume that this is just what the conservatives fear," answered the journalist, "an excessively warm patriotism — and it must be admitted, often improvident and absurd in its manifestations — strikes them with terror. Formerly they feared that the peasants, who read 'The Pole' might take to their scythes. At present they have gooseflesh when some zealot breaks out with a word about the future kingdom of Poland."

"Kingdom of Poland!" said Swidwicki, snorting ironically. "I will tell you gentlemen an anecdote. A certain Russian official became insane and suffered from a mania of greatness. In reality his delusion lay in this, that he attained the highest position in heaven as well as on earth. And whom do you suppose that he imagined himself to be?"

"Well! God?"

"More."

"I confess that my imagination reels," answered Gronski.

"Ah, you see! In the meantime he invented a position still higher, for he represented himself as the 'presiding officer' of the Holy Trinity. Understand? That there was a committee consisting of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost — and he was its chairman. Is not that more?"

"True, but why do you cite that anecdote?"

"As a proof that for diseased brains there are no impossibilities and that only such brains can think of a kingdom of Poland."

Gronski remained silent for a while, and then said:

"Twenty millions of people are something tangible, and permit me to say that the chairmanship of the Holy Trinity is a greater impossibility. What do you know about the future and who can divine it? The most you can say is that in view of the present conditions the thought of creating anything like it by force, through revolution, would be a mistake, and even a crime. But our nation will be devoured only when it allows itself to be devoured. But if it does not? If through great and noble efforts it shall bring forth enlightenment, social discipline, prosperity, science, literature, art, wealth, sanitation, a quiet internal strength, then what? And who to-day can tell what shape in the future the political and social conditions will assume? Who can vouch that the systems of government of the present day may not entirely change, that they will not fall and will not be adjudged as idiotic and criminal as to-day we regard tortures? Who can divine what governments will arise in that great sea which is humanity? The man who, for instance, in the time of Cicero would have said that social economy could exist without slavery would have been deemed crazy, and, nevertheless, to-day slavery does not exist. And in our political relations something similar might take place. To-day's conditions of coercion might change into voluntary and free unions. I do not know whether it will be so, but you do not know that it will not be so. In view of this, I see the necessity of quiet and iron labor, but I do not see the necessity of the repudiation or renunciation of any ideals — and I will tell you too that the Pole who does not bear that great ideal, at the bottom of his soul, is in a measure a renegade; and I do not understand why he does not renounce everything."

"Write that in verse and in Latin," answered Swidwicki with impatience, "for in that manner you will upset the heads of a less number of men."

"Then our present day antagonists may themselves say to us: 'Arrange matters to suit yourselves.' At the present moment it may seem a naïve fancy, but the future carries in its bosom such surprises, as not only the shortsighted politicians have not dreamed of, but even philosophers who can look ahead."

After which, having evidently sufficient of this discussion, he added:

"But enough of this. I suspend the argument and pause. To-day we must occupy ourselves not with politics, but with the young lady whose birthday we celebrate and whom undoubtedly such things weary."

Saying this, he turned to Marynia, standing at Miss Anney's side, but she, shaking her little head, replied at once with great ardor:

"On the contrary! I am of the same opinion as Pan Gronski."

And she blushed to her ears, for all began to laugh, while Swidwicki replied:

"If that is so, then everything is settled."

Ladislaus smiled at Marynia's embarrassment, though in truth he did not know what it all was about, as his whole soul surged in his enamoured eyes, gazing at Miss Anney. She stood between two chairs, calm, smiling, white in her light dress, cheery as the summer dawn, and only after the close of the discussion rosier than usual, and he plainly devoured her with his gaze. His thoughts and heart raged within him. He looked at her radiant countenance, on her bare arms, chiseled as if out of warm marble, at her developed strong breast, on the sinuous pliant lines of her figure, on her knees turned towards him and outlined under her light dress, and he was seized by a whirlwind of desires, which struggled with the feeling of worship and respect which he entertained for this maiden, pure as a tear. His pulse commenced to beat strangely and on his fore-

head appeared a braid of veins. At the thought that she was to be his wife and that all these treasures would be his, he was enveloped by a fire of blood, and at the same time by some kind of debility so great that at times he was uncertain whether he would be able to lift the chair. At the same time he quarrelled with himself. He became indignant from his whole soul at that "animal" which he could not subdue within himself, and upbraided himself to the last words because he did not love her — "that angel" — as he should love her, that is with the love which only kneels and idolizes. So, in thought, he fell on his knees before his loved one, embraced her limbs, and implored forgiveness, but when he imagined that his lips kissed her feet, again lust seized him by the hair. And in this struggle he felt not only unworthy of her, not only "a beast," but at the same time a half-baked and ludicrous blunderer, deprived of that reason, peace, and self-control which a true man should possess.

He was also possessed by astonishment that everything which could promise delight should also at the same time torment him. Fortunately, his further torments and meditations were interrupted by music, with which an evening at Pani Otocka's had to conclude. Bochener sat at the piano, the irascible notary began to blow in his flute, and Marynia stood aside with the violin, and if those present were not accustomed to the sight of her, they would have been astonished at the change which took place in her. The beautiful but childish face of a delighted and inquisitive girl assumed in a single moment an expression of gravity and profound calm. Her eyes became thoughtful and sad. On the red background of the salon her slim form appeared like a design of the best style on a painted church window. There was something in her plainly hieratic.

A trio began. The gentle tones began to rock Ladis-

laus' agitated soul. His senses gradually fell asleep and his desires were extinguished. His love metamorphosed into a great winged angel who carried his loved one in his arms as if a child, and soared with her in the immeasurable space before an altar composed of the lustre of the evening twilight and the nocturnal lights of stars.

The hour was late, when Gronski, Swidwicki, and Ladislaus left Pani Otocka's. On the streets they met few pedestrians, but every few paces, they encountered the military and police patrol, which stopped them and asked for passports. This time Swidwicki did not pretend to be intoxicated, for he fell into a bad humor just because at Pani Otocka's he had to content himself with two glasses of wine. So, showing the policeman the passport, he pointed to his dress-suit and white cravat and asked them surlily whether socialists or bandits dressed in that manner.

"If only lightning would smite the one and the other," he said, striking the sidewalk with his cane. "In addition, everything is closed, not only the restaurants in the hotels, but even the pharmacies, in which in an extreme case, vin de coca or alcohol can be procured. The pharmacies are striking! We have lived to see that! The doctors also ought to strike and then the grave-diggers will unwillingly have to strike also. May the devil seize all! At home I have not a single bottle; so throughout the entire night I will not be able to sleep a wink and to-morrow I will be as if taken off the cross — "

"Come with us," said Gronski, "perhaps we may find a bottle of something and black coffee."

"You have saved not only my life but that of my 'associate,' especially if two bottles are found."

"We will seek. But what kind of associate are you speaking of?"

"True, you yet know nothing. I will relate it over a glass."

It was not far to Gronski's residence, so soon they were seated around a table on which was found a bottle of noble Chambertin and a coffee-percolator with black coffee, steaming in a delicious manner.

Swidwicki regained his spirits.

"Those ladies," he said, "are real angels, and for the reason that it is there, as if in Paradise, where happiness consists in gazing upon eternal brightness and listening to the archangel choir."

Here he addressed Krzycki:

"I observed that this suffices for you and Gronski — but for me it is absolutely too little."

"Only do not begin to sharpen your tongue on those ladies," replied Gronski, "for I shall order the bottle removed instanter."

Swidwicki hugged it with both hands.

"I idolize — all three," he exclaimed with comic precipitancy.

"Of what kind of associate were you speaking?"

Swidwicki swallowed the wine and, closing his eyes, for a while appraised its value.

"I have with me from this morning some kind of gallows-bird, for whom the police are looking and, if they find him with me, they will probably hang us both."

"You, however, have given him shelter?"

"I gave him shelter because he was brought by one whom I could not refuse."

"I will wager that it was some woman."

"That is true. I can add that she is comely and one of those who excite in me a responsive electric current. But I cannot tell you her name, as she begged me to keep that secret."

"I do not ask," said Gronski, "but as to the current I have no doubt, as otherwise you would fear to place yourself in jeopardy."

To this Swidwicki said:

"Know this, that I do not fear anything in the world, and this gives me in this enslaved country such an unheard of independence as is not enjoyed by any one else."

Saying this, he drained the glass to the bottom and exclaimed:

"Long live liberty — but only my own."

"Nevertheless, all this demonstrates that you have a little good in your heart."

"Not in the least. I did that, firstly, because I expect a reward, on which, after all, in such virtuous company, I prefer not to dilate — unless after a second bottle — and again, because I will have some one upon whom I can vent my spleen and assert my ascendency. I assure you that my gallows-bird will not sleep upon roses — and who knows whether after a week he will not prefer the gallows to my hospitality?"

"That is possible. But in the meantime?"

"In the meantime I bought for him Allen's Waters in order to bleach the black tufts of hair on his head into a light color. 'Are te biondegiante' — as during Titian's time. I feel also a little satisfaction at the thought that the police will stand on their heads to find him and will not get him."

"But if they find him?"

"I doubt it. Do you remember that for a certain time I had a footman, a native of Bessarabia, whom you knew? Over two months ago he robbed me and ran away. He has already written to me from New York with a proposition which I will not repeat to you. A superb type! Perfectly modern. But before his escape he begged me to return to him his passport, as now they are asking about passports every moment. But I mislaid it in some book and could not find it. But recently — two or three days ago — I accidentally found it, so that my gallows-bird will have not only blond hair but also a passport."

"And will he not rob you like his predecessor?"

"I told him that he ought to do that, but he became indignant. It seems to me that he is boiling with indignation from morning until night, and if in the end he should steal from me it would be from indignation that I could suppose anything like that of him. That little patroness who shoved him on my neck vouches also that he is honest, but did not even tell me his name. Clever girl! For she says thus: 'If they find him, then you can excuse yourself on the plea that you did not know who he was.' And she is right — though when some marks of gratitude are concerned, she scratches like a cat. For her, I expose myself to the halter, and when I wanted from her a little of that — then I almost got it in the snout."

Gronski knit his brows and began to sharply eye Swidwicki; after which, he said:

"Miss Anney's servant asked me this morning about your residence. Tell me, what does that mean?"

Swidwicki again drank the wine.

"Ah, she also called — she was there. Pani Otocka sent through her an invitation."

"Pani Otocka sent you an invitation through Pauly. Tell that to some one else."

"About what are you concerned?" asked Swidwicki, with jovial effrontery. "She ordered her to send the invitation through a messenger but the messengers since last night are on a strike. Now everybody strikes. Girls also, — with the exception of the 'female associates,' particularly the old and ugly ones. These, if they strike, then sans le vouloir."

The reply appeared to Gronski to be satisfactory, as in reality messengers had been absent from the streets since the previous day. Then Swidwicki turned the conversation into another direction.

"I received him," he said, "not to save an ass, but be-

cause I am bored and it just suited me. Some wise Italian once said that the divinity which holds everything in this world in restraint is called la paura, — fear; and the Italian was right. If the people did not fear, nothing would remain — not a single social form of life! On this ladder of fear there are numerous rounds and the highest is the fear of death. Death! That is a real divinity! Reges rego, leges lego, judice judico! And I confess that I, whose life has been passed in toppling from pedestals various divinities, had the most difficulty in overcoming this divinity. But I overcame it and so completely that I made it my dog."

"What did you do?"

"A dog, which as often as it pleases me, I stroke over the hair, as for instance now, when I received that revolutionary booby. But that is yet nothing! See under what terror people live: the executioner's axe, the gallows, the bullet, cancer, consumption, typhoid fever, tabes — suffering, pain, whole months and years of torture — and why? Before the fear of death. And I jeer at that. Me, hangman will not execute, cancer will not gnaw, consumption will not consume, pain will not break, torture will not debase, for I shout, in a given moment, at this divinity before which all tremble, as at a spaniel: 'Lie down!'"

After which he laughed and said:

"And that mad booby of mine, however, hid himself as if before death. Tell me what would happen if people actually did not fear?"

"They would not be themselves," answered Gronski. "They desire life, not death."

XI

SWIDWICKI did not lie when he said that he did not know the name of the revolutionist to whom he promised an asylum, for in reality Pauly had made a secret of it. She so arranged it with Laskowicz on the way. The young student, learning that Swidwicki, to whom the girl was conducting him, was an acquaintance of Gronski and Pani Otocka, in the first moments became frightened inordinately. He recollected the letters which he had written to Panna Marynia, and his odious relations with Krzycki upon whom his party a short time previously perpetrated an attack. Personally he did not participate in it and the suggestion did not emanate from him, but on the other hand he did not have the slightest doubt that the committee issued the death sentence as a result of his reports designating Krzycki as the chief obstacle to their propaganda, and he remembered that he did nothing to prevent the attempt, and was even pleased in his soul that a man, hateful to him and at the same time a putative rival, would be removed from his path.

For a time he even felt, owing to this "washing of hands," a certain internal disgust; at the intelligence, however, that the attack was unsuccessful he experienced, as it were, a feeling of disappointment. And now he was going to seek shelter with a man who was a relative of Pani Otocka and who might have heard of the letters to Marynia and his relations with Krzycki. This was a turn of affairs, clearly fatal, which might frustrate the best intentions of Panna Pauly.

Considering all this he began to beg the girl not to mention his name, giving as a reason that in case the police should find him, Swidwicki would be less culpable.

Pauly admitted the full justness of this; after a while, however, she observed that if Pan Gronski should ever visit Swidwicki then everything would be disclosed.

"Yes," answered the student, "but I need that refuge for only a few days; after which I will look for another, or else my chiefs may dispatch me abroad."

"What chiefs?" asked Pauly.

"Those who desire liberty and bread for all, and who will not tolerate that some one should be raised above you, little lady, either in rank or money."

"I do not understand. How is that? I would not be a servant and would not have a mistress?"

"Yes."

Pauly was struck by the thought that in that case she would be nearer to her "young lord," but not having time to discuss this any longer, she repeated:

"I do not understand. Later, I will question you about it, but now let us proceed."

And they walked hurriedly ahead, in silence, until they reached Swidwicki's door. On the ringing of the bell, he opened it himself. With surprise but also with a smile he saw Pauly in the dark hallway and afterwards catching sight of Laskowicz, he asked:

"What is he here for? Who is he?"

"May we enter and may I speak with you in private?" asked the girl.

"If you please. The more private, the more agreeable it will be to me."

And they entered. The student remained in the first room. The master of the house conducted Pauly to another and closed the door after him.

Laskowicz began to examine the large room, full of dis-

order, with books, and engravings, and an abundance of bottles with white and blue labels. On the round table, near the window, piled with daily newspapers, stood a bottle with the legend: "Vin de Coca; Mariani," and a few ash trays with charred lighters for cigars and cigarettes. The furniture in the room was heavy and evidently when new was costly but it was now dirty. Hanging on the wall were pictures, among them a portrait of Pani Otocka, while yet a young unmarried lady. In one corner protruded the well known statue of the Neapolitan Psyche with mutilated skull.

The student placed the flower-pot with the Italian lilies on the table and began to eavesdrop. His life was involved, for if shelter was denied to him he undoubtedly would be arrested that day. Through the closed door came to him from time to time Swidwicki's outbursts of laughter, and the conversing voices, in which the voice of the girl sounded at times as if entreating, and at other moments angry and indignant. This lasted a long time. Finally the doors opened and the first to enter was Pauly, evidently angry, and with burning cheeks; after her came Swidwicki, who said:

"Very well. Since the beautiful Pauly so wishes it, I will not tell any one who brought to me this Sir Ananias, and will keep him under cover, but on condition that Pauly will prove a little grateful to me."

"I am grateful," answered the girl with irritation.

"These are the proofs," said Swidwicki, displaying marks on the back of his hands. "A cat could not scratch any better. But to only look at little Pauly, I will agree even to that. The next time we will have some candy."

"Good-by till we meet again."

"Till we meet. May it be as frequent as possible."

The girl took the pot with the flowers and left. Then Swidwicki thrust his hands into his pockets and began to

stare at Laskowicz as if he had before him, not a human being, but some singular animal. Laskowicz looked at him in the same way, and during that short interval they acquired for each other a mutual dislike.

Finally Swidwicki asked:

"Ah, esteemed Sir Benefactor, of what party? Socialist, anarchist, or bandit? I beg of you! without ceremony! I do not ask your name, but it is necessary to be acquainted somehow."

"I belong to the Polish Socialist Party," answered the student with a certain pride.

"Aha! Then to the most stupid one. Excellent. That is as if some one said: To the atheistic-Catholic or to the national-cosmopolitan? I am truly delighted to bid you welcome."

Laskowicz was not in the least meek by nature, and besides he understood in a moment that he had before him a man with whom he would gain nothing by meekness; so, gazing straight into Swidwicki's eyes, he replied almost contemptuously:

"If you, sir, can be a Catholic and Pole, I can be a socialist and Pole."

But Swidwicki laughed.

"No, Sir Chieftain," he said, "Catholicism is a smell. One can be a cat and have a fainter or stronger odor, but one cannot be a cat and dog in one and the same person."

"I am no chieftain; only a third-class agent," retorted Laskowicz. "You, sir, have given me a refuge and yourself the right to mock me."

"Exactly, exactly! But for that I shall not require any gratitude. We can, after all, change the subject. Sit down, Sir Third-class Agent. What is new? How is His Majesty, the king."

"What king?"

"Why the one you serve and who to-day has the most

courtiers; the one who, most of all, cannot endure the truth and most easily gulps adulation; the one, who in winter smells of whiskey and in summer of sour sweat, — that mangy, lousy, scabby, stinking, gracious, or rather, ungracious ruler of the day, King Rabble."

If Laskowicz had heard the most monstrous blasphemies against a holy object, which heretofore mankind venerated, he would not have been more horrified than at the words which passed Swidwicki's lips. For him it was as if he were struck on the head with a club, for it never crossed his mind that any one would have dared to utter anything like that. His eyes became dim, his jaws tightened convulsively, his hands began to tremble. In the first moments he was possessed by an irrepressible desire to shoot Swidwicki in the head with the revolver he carried with him and afterwards slam the door and go wherever his eyes would take him, or else to place the barrel to his ear and shatter his own head, but he lacked the strength. All night long he had toiled in the printing plant; after which he had fled over the roofs and through the streets like a wild animal. He was fatigued, hungry, and exhausted with the frightful experiences of that morning. So he suddenly staggered on his feet, became as pale as a corpse, and would have tumbled upon the ground if a chair had not stood close by, into which he sank heavily, as if dead.

"What is this? What in the devil ails you?" asked Swidwicki.

And he began to assist him. He poured out of a bottle the remainder of the cognac and forced him to drink it; afterwards he lifted him from the chair and led him to another room and almost forcibly put him in his own bed.

"What the devil!" he repeated; "how do you feel?"

"Better," answered Laskowicz.

Swidwicki glanced at his watch.

"In about ten minutes, the old woman who serves here ought to come. I will order her to bring something to eat. In the meanwhile lie quietly."

Laskowicz obeyed this advice, as he could not do otherwise. Lying there, however, he for a time knit his brow, and evidently his mind was laboring. Then he said:

"That king — about whom you inquired — is — starving —"

"May the devil take him!" replied Swidwicki. "The bourgeoisie will feed him, and for this he at the first opportunity will cut their throats. But do not take to heart too seriously whatever I say; for I say the same and stronger things to all parties. All! Do you understand, sir?"

The bell interrupted further conversation. Laskowicz trembled like an aspen leaf.

"That is my old woman. I recognize the ring," said Swidwicki. "She is earlier to-day than usual. Very well. I will order her to bring food at once."

In fact, after a quarter of an hour, food was placed on the table. Refreshed, Laskowicz came entirely to himself and did not think of forsaking his new shelter. Swidwicki began to open and rummage through various drawers. Finally, finding a passport, he handed it to Laskowicz and said:

"Before you, Sir Benefactor, become dictator of all Poland you will call yourself Zaranczko. You come from Bessarabia and have served with me a year. If they should catch you and, with you, me, repeat only one expression, '*Mamalyga*,[1] *mamalyga*.'"

In this manner Laskowicz was installed in Swidwicki's home.

[1] Mamalyga, a kind of porridge in Bessarabia, made principally of corn.

XII

THE morning after Marynia's birthday was unusually gloomy. The western wind drove heavy black clouds, which hung over the city, foretelling a storm. The atmosphere became oppressive and sultry. When Ladislaus entered the church it was completely dark within. In the Chapel of the Divine Mother a quiet votive mass commenced almost with his entry, and the flickering little flames of the candles, lighted before the altar, poorly illuminated the darkness. Ladislaus began to search with his eyes for Miss Anney and he recognized her by the light hair protruding from under her hat. She knelt in the first pew, her hands crossed in prayer and resting upon an open book. Seeing Ladislaus, she nodded her head and drew aside, to make room for him, not pausing in her prayers. He wanted to speak to her but did not dare, and only kneeling, drew somewhat towards himself the book so that they might pray from it together. It was, however, so dark that he could read nothing and after a while he became convinced that he could not pray at all. He was seized by great emotion, for he understood that a new epoch in his life had commenced, and that this moment, in which by the consent of Miss Anney he knelt at her side before the altar to mutually entreat God for blessing, signified more than any other avowals, and that it was the first sanctification of their loves and their joint future lives. He was possessed by a sense of his happiness, but at the same time by some kind of solemn apprehension at the thought that everything would soon cease to be only a dream, only a fancy, only a phantom of happiness, and become realized and

accomplished. Through his mind glided the interrogatories, — How will he be able to bear this happiness, what will he do with it, and how will he acquit himself, — and from these questions there was bred in him a sense of immense responsibility, surcharged with fear. It was like certain worries which hitherto, as a free man, he had not known or at least had not met face to face. And he saw before him cares more direct and immediate. The moment of his interview with his mother was approaching; there were also some secret obstacles, which Gronski mentioned, and it was incumbent upon him to weigh everything, to plan, settle various matters, and set aside anticipated difficulties. In truth, now, if ever, it was worth while and necessary to trust to the Divine favor, invoke the All-provident aid, and deliver her to the care of the Future. Ladislaus observed that similar feelings and similar thoughts must have swayed Miss Anney as her countenance was calm, composed, grave, and even sad. The little flames of the candles were reflected in her upraised eyes and for a while it seemed to Ladislaus that he saw tears in those eyes. Apparently with the whole strength of her soul she committed him and herself to God. And thus they knelt beside each other, shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart, and already united, happy, and a little timorous. Ladislaus, having suppressed the whirlwind of thoughts, at last began to pray and said to God, "Do with me whatever Thou wilt, but grant her happiness and peace." And a prodigious overflowing wave of love deluged his bosom. His prayer became at the same time a solemn espousal and internal oath that he would never wrong that most precious being in the world, and that those eyes would never weep for his sake.

In the meantime the votive mass was nearing its close. When the priest turned from the altar, his words, in the half-empty chapel, were as if dreamy and like whispering amidst sighs — as usually happens at the early morning

mass. But at times they were deafened by thunders, as the storm began outside. The windows of the chapel darkened yet more, and from time to time livid lightning illuminated the panes; after which the darkness grew yet denser, and on the altar the little flames of the candles twinkled uneasily. The priest turned around once more; "Dominus vobiscum!" after which, "Ite missa est." Afterwards he blessed the assembled and retired. The small number of faithful who heard the mass followed his example. Only they two remained. Then she began to say in a whisper, broken by emotion, "Under Thy protection we flee, Holy Mother of God," and the further words "Our entreaties deign not to spurn and from all evil deign to preserve us forever," were said jointly with Ladislaus, and in this manner the entire prayer concluded.

After this, silence fell between them, was broken only after a long while by Ladislaus.

"We will have to wait," he said in a low voice. "The storm is yet continuing."

"Very well," answered Miss Anney.

"My dear, dearest lady—"

But she placed her finger to her lips and silence again ensued. They did not, however, have to wait very long, for the summer storms come and pass away like birds. After the lapse of a quarter of an hour they left the church. The streets were flooded by the rain, but through the rifts of the scattered and rent clouds the sun shone brightly and, it seemed, moistly. Miss Anney's eyes winked under the flood of light and her countenance was as if she was awakened from a dream. But her composure and gravity did not pass away. Ladislaus, on the other hand, at the sight of the sun, and the bustle and life on the streets, was at once imbued with gayety and hope. He glanced once and again at his companion and she seemed to him as wonderful as a dream, charming as never before, and

adorable simply beyond measure and bounds. He felt that he was capable of seizing her at that moment in his arms; of showing her to the sun, the clouds, the city, the human multitude, and exclaiming: "Behold my wealth, my treasure; this is the joy of my life!" But, conjecturing properly that Miss Anney would not assent to any manifestations like that, he subdued this impulse and directed his thoughts to more important matters.

"My adored lady," said he, "I must give utterance to words which burn my lips. When may I come to see you?"

"To-day at four," she replied; "I also have to tell you something upon which everything depends."

"Everything depends upon you, lady, and upon nothing else."

But her clear cheeks were suffused with confused blushes: her eyes shone as if with disagreeable uneasiness; and she replied:

"God grant — you do not know, sir — you do not know sir — " she repeated with emphasis. "We will be alone.— But now we must part."

Ladislaus escorted her to the carriage, kissed her hands and remained alone. Her words, corroborating that which Gronski had intimated as a result of his interviews with Pani Otocka, disquieted him, however, but only for a short time, as he was too much in love to suppose that it could change his love or swerve him from his purpose. At the mere thought of this he shrugged his shoulders.

"Women," he said to himself, "are always full of scruples and to actual difficulties they add chimerical ones."

After which, he returned home in the best of humor, and besides Gronski, found there Dolhanski.

"Behold," exclaimed Gronski, "lo, here is Dolhanski the bachelor. Congratulate him for he is going to marry."

"No?" Truly? asked Ladislaus, amused.

"With Panna Kajetana Wlocek," added Dolhanski, with sangfroid and extraordinary gravity.

"Then I tender my best wishes from the whole heart. When is the wedding?"

"Very soon, on account of the weather, famine, fire, and war, also similar exceptional circumstances. In a week. Without publication of the banns, on an *indult*. After the wedding, the same night a trip abroad."

"And you say all this seriously?"

"With the greatest seriousness in the world. Observe the exquisite consequences."

Here Dolhanski spread out his fingers and began to enumerate:"

"Primo, my credit is resurrected, as a Hindoo fakir, who, buried in the ground for a whole month, awakes after exhumation to a new life; secundo: Gorek is without a copper coin of indebtedness and without society; tertio: my marriage settlement surpasses my expectations; quarto: my fiancée from good luck has grown so beautiful that you would not recognize her."

"What are you saying?" cried Ladislaus, ingenuously.

XIII

PROMPTLY at four, Ladislaus appeared at Miss Anney's. She received him feelingly and for a greeting offered both hands which he began to press alternately to his lips and his forehead. Afterwards they sat beside each other and for a long time heard only the quickened beating of their own hearts and the faint sounds of the clock on the writing-desk. They reciprocally glanced at each other but neither was able to say the first word. After a while life could glow for them like a new dawn, glistening with joy and happiness, but, for the time being, it was heavy, embarrassing, the more embarrassing the longer the silence continued.

Finally, Ladislaus from a feeling, that, if he kept silent much longer, he would appear ridiculous, mustered enough courage and spoke in a broken voice, whose sounds appeared strange to him!

"From this morning I have a little hope — and nevertheless my heart beats as if I did not have any — I could not say a single word until I caught my breath — but that is nothing strange as my whole life is concerned. — Lady, you long ago, of course, surmised how deeply — how with my whole soul I love you, — you knew this long ago — is it not so?"

Here he again inhaled the air, took a deep breath, and continued:

"To-day in the church I said to myself this: 'If she will hear me, if she does not spurn me, if she consents to be my own for my whole life — my wife — then I vow solemnly to God before this altar that I will love and honor her; that I will never wrong her and will give her all the happiness which is in my power.' And I swear to you that this is the

truth — It only depends upon you, lady, that it shall be so — upon your consent — upon your faith in me."

Saying this, he again raised Miss Anney's hands to his lips and imprinted upon them a long imploring kiss and she leaned towards him so that her hair lightly brushed his forehead, and quietly replied:

"I consent and believe with my whole soul — but this does not depend upon me alone."

"Only upon you, lady," exclaimed Ladislaus.

And believing that Miss Anney had his mother in mind, he began to say with a brightened face and deep joy in his voice:

"My mother desires my happiness above all things and I assure you that she will come here with me to beg of you; and with me she will thank you for this great, this ineffable boon, and in the meantime I on my knees thank —"

He wanted to drop on his knees before her and embrace her limbs with his arms, but she began to restrain him and say with feverish haste:

"No, no. Do not kneel, sir, — you must first hear me. I consent, but I must confess things upon which everything depends. Please calm yourself."

Ladislaus rose, again sat beside her and said, with anxious surprise:

"I listen, my dearest lady."

"And I must compose myself a little," replied Miss Anney.

After which she rose, and approaching the window, pressed her forehead against the pane.

For some time silence again ensued.

"What is it?" spoke out Krzycki.

Miss Anney withdrew her forehead from the pane. Her countenance was calmer, but her eyes were dimmed as if with tears. Approaching the table, she sat down opposite to Ladislaus.

"Before I relate what it is now necessary for me to state," she said, "I have a great favor to ask of you. And if you — love me truly — then you will not refuse —"

"Lady, if you demanded my life, I would not refuse it. I pledge you my word," he exclaimed.

"Very well. Give me your word. Then I will be certain."

"I pledge it in advance and swear upon our future happiness that I will comply with your every wish."

"Very well," repeated Miss Anney. "Then I first beg of you, by all you hold most precious, not to feel at all bound by anything you have said to me just now."

"I not feel bound? In what way? Of course, it may not be binding upon you, lady — but on me —"

"Well, then, I release you from all obligations and consider that nothing has been said. You promised me that you would not refuse me anything, but this is not all."

"Not all?"

"No, I am anxious that after what I shall tell you, you shall not give me any answer — and for a whole week shall not return to me and shall not try to see me."

"But in the name of God, what is it?" cried Ladislaus; "why should I suffer a week of torments? What does this mean?"

"And for me it also will be a torment," she answered in a soft voice. "But it is necessary, it is imperative. You will have to explain everything to yourself; weigh everything, unravel and decide everything — and form a resolution — afterwards you may return — or may not return — and a week for all that will be rather too little."

And perceiving the agitation on Ladislaus' face, she hurriedly added, as if alarmed:

"Sir, you promised — you pledged me your word!"

Ladislaus drew his hand across the back of his head; after which he began to rub his forehead with his palm.

"I gave the word," he said at last, "because you requested it, lady — but why?"

And Miss Anney turned pale to the eyes; for a while her lips quivered as though she struggled vainly to draw the words from her bosom, and only after an interval did she reply:

"Because — at one time I — did not bear the name of Anney."

"You did not bear the name of Anney?"

"I — am — Hanka Skibianka."

Ladislaus rose, staggered like a drunken man, and began to stare at her with a bewildered look.

And she added in almost a whisper:

"Little master! — 't is I — of the mill."

And tears coursed quietly over her pallid countenance.

PART III

I

Krzycki left Miss Anney's with a sensation as if lightning had struck directly in front of him and suddenly stunned him. He could neither collect nor connect his thoughts; he was not even in a condition to realize his situation nor reflect upon it. The only impression, or rather feeling, which in the first moments remained was a feeling of illimitable amazement. On the way he repeated every little while, "Hanka Skibianka! Hanka Skibianka!" and seemed incapable of doing aught else. He did not find Gronski at home, as the latter had left immediately after the noon hour, telling the servant that he would return late at night. So he went to his room, locked himself in without knowing why; afterwards he flung himself into an armchair and sat abstractedly for over an hour. After the lapse of that time, he opened his trunk and began to pack things into it with excessive zeal, until finally he propounded to himself the question: "Why am I doing this?" Not being able to find an answer, he abandoned that work and only resumed it when he came to the unexpected conclusion that in any case he would have to move away from Gronski's.

Having finished, he put on his hat and left, without any well-defined object, for the city. For a while a desire rose in him to call upon his mother and Pani Otocka, but he stifled it at once. For what? It seemed to him that he had nothing to tell his mother about himself and his intentions; and that he could talk with her only about this unheard-of

intelligence, the discussion of which would be for him, beyond all expression, afflicting. Unconsciously, he reached the Holy Cross Church and wanted to enter it, but the hour was late and the church was locked. The morning of that day and the joint prayer with her stood vividly before his eyes. Ah, how sincerely he prayed; how he loved her; how he loved her! And now he could not resist the impression that this light-haired, idolized lady, with whom he said in that chapel "Under Thy Protection," and Hanka Skibianka were two different beings. And he felt in his heart a kind of disenchantment with which he began to contend. For why was he nevertheless so acutely affected by it? Was it because Hanka was a peasant girl and he a nobleman? No! Miss Anney never represented herself as an English noblewoman, and a Polish peasant is no worse than an English commoner. He could not clearly perceive that the reason of it lay in this: that Miss Anney through her descent alone, foreign and distant, appeared to him a sort of princess, and Hanka was a near and domestic girl from Zarnow. She aroused less curiosity and therefore was less attractive. She was so much easier, therefore, cheaper to him. In vain he recalled and repeated that this Hanka is that same light-haired lady, charming as a dream, alluring, genteel, womanly, responding in sentiment to every thought and every word; the feeling of disenchantment was more powerful than those thoughts, and that charm of exoticism, which suddenly was lacking in the girl, minimized her worth in his eyes.

But, besides this, there was something else, in view of which the disenchantment and all unexpected impressions stood aside and became matters of secondary importance. This was, that he had once possessed that girl — body and soul. She was at that time almost a child — a flower not yet in full bloom which he plucked and carried for some

time at his bosom. The memory of that could be a reproach only for him; no fault whatever weighed on her. He recollected those moonlight nights on which he stole to the mill; those whispers which were one quiet song of love and intoxication, interrupted only by kisses; he recalled how he clasped to his heart her girlish body, fragrant with the hay of the fields; how he drank the tears from her eyes and how he said to her that he would give up for her all the ladies of all the courts. The idyl passed, but now there wafted upon him from her the breath of the first youthful years, the first love, the first ecstasy, and the truly great poetry of life. Besides, there was truth in what he had confided to Gronski in Jastrzeb: that the girl loved him as no other woman in the world surely would love him. And at the thought of this, his heart began to melt. Together with the wave of recollection, Hanka returned and again engaged his thoughts.

Yes. But that was Hanka and she is Miss Anney. In Ladislaus, from the time he fell in love with her, his senses leaped wildly towards her like a pack of yelping hounds; but he held them in leash because at the same time he knelt before his beloved. She was to him an object of desire but at the same time a sacred relic; something so inaccessible, exalted, pure, and mysterious in its virginity that at the thought that the moment would arrive when he would be the master of those treasures and secrets appeared to him a delight beyond all measure of delight; all the more fathomless as it was, united, as it were, with a sacrilege. And now he had to say to himself that this sacrilege he had already committed; that the charm of something unknown was dispelled; that in this vestal there were for him no mysteries and that he had already drunk from that cup. And this again was one lure less; one disenchantment more. In this manner Miss Anney muddied his recollection of the field peasant-girl, Hanka,—

Hanka depreciated the charm of Miss Anney. Both were so different, so unlike each other, that, being unable to merge them into one entity, he vainly intensified that jarring impression with a feeling of disquietude and pain.

In this vexation of spirit there occurred to him one wicked, low, and ugly thought. In what manner did the poor and simple Hanka change into the brilliant Miss Anney? In what manner could a gray sparrow from under a village thatched hut be transformed into a paradisiacal bird? Hanka was a betrayed girl; therefore the bridges had been burnt behind her. Amidst the wealth of a foreign land, beautiful but poor girls have before them only one road to the acquisition of affluence and even polish, and that was the road of shame. Hanka found one patron who took care of her in the appropriate manner; how many similar patrons and protectors could Miss Anney find? At the thought of this Krzycki's head swam. Conscience said to him, "You opened those gates before her," and at the same time he was seized by such anger at Miss Anney and himself that if the life or death of both rested in his hands, he would at that moment have selected death. Something within him was rent asunder; something crashed. It seemed to him that again, just above his head, pealed lightning, which stunned him and burnt, within him, to a crisp, the ability to think.

He wandered a long time over the city. He himself did not know in what manner he again found himself before Pani Otocka's home, but he did not enter for he once more felt that at that time he could not speak with his mother. He returned to his own house late at night. Gronski was already at home, and for an hour had been waiting for him with the tea.

"Good evening," he said, "I have returned from your mother's."

And Ladislaus asked him with blunt impetuosity, "Do you know who Miss Anney is?"

"I do. Pani Otocka told me."

A moment of silence followed.

"What do you say to this?"

"I could ask you that question."

Ladislaus sat heavily in the chair, drew his palm over his forehead and replied with bitter irony:

"Ah, I have time. I was given a week for consideration."

"That is not too much," answered Gronski, looking at him questioningly.

"Certainly. Does Mother also know?"

"Yes. Pani Otocka told her everything."

Again silence ensued.

"My dear Laudie," said Gronski, "I can understand that this must have shocked you, and for that reason I will not speak with you of it until you calm down and regain your equipoise. You must also become familiar with and well weigh the reasons why Miss Anney told only Pani Otocka who she was and why she came to Jastrzeb under her new name, to which, after all, she has a perfect right. Here is a letter from her. She requested me to deliver it to you to-morrow and that is why I did not hand it to you as soon as you appeared. At present I do not think that it would be proper to defer the matter. But do not open it at once nor in my presence. Put it away and read it when alone, when you can ponder over every word. Positively do this. That which has happened moved me to such an extent that for the time being I could not speak of it calmly. To-day I can only give you this advice: be a man and do not allow yourself to be swept away by the current of impressions. Row!"

To this Ladislaus, who sobered up a little under the influence of these words, said:

"I thank you, sir. I will read the letter in privacy. It

is now so indispensable to me that I trust, sir, that you will not take it ill of me if I no longer abuse your hospitality. I am sincerely and cordially grateful to you for everything, but I must lock myself up. How long — I do not know. When I am myself again, I will come to you to discuss everything, God grant, more calmly. Now in reality, I see that I was justly given one week's time. But besides time, I feel the need of my own den. I cannot get rid of various thoughts, immensely bitter and even horrible. To-day they hold me by the head and it is necessary that I should hold them by the head — and for that reason I want to have my own den."

"You know how willing I am to please you," answered Gronski; "I understand you, and though in advance I decided not to torment you with any questions, nevertheless, do what is best for yourself. I must tell you also that your mother is moving to a hotel, as she is offended with Pani Otocka. She took umbrage because she did not tell her at once in Jastrzeb who Miss Anney was."

"I confess that I do not understand that —"

"Nevertheless, that would have been directly contrary to what those ladies desired. Pani Otocka's intentions were the noblest. Time will elucidate and equalize everything. Even Marynia did not know anything, not only because Pani Zosia was bound by her word, but also because she did not deem it proper to acquaint her with your former behavior and your relations with the Hanka of former days. With Hanka — Miss Anney! That was an unheard-of turn of affairs. Do you remember our conversation in Jastrzeb when we went hunting for woodcock? Do you remember?"

"I remember, but I cannot speak of it."

"Yes, better not speak of it at this time. Miss Anney's letter undoubtedly will clear up the dark sides of the affair

and explain what is now unintelligible. If you desire to read it at once, I will go and leave you here."

"I am very curious about it and for just that reason I will take my leave of you."

"But you will pass this night with me?"

"I have packed my things and the hotels are always open."

"In such case good-by!—and remember what I told you. Row! Row!"

After a moment Gronski remained alone. He also was agitated, distressed, but curious to the highest degree. When after Ladislaus' confessions in Jastrzeb, he said to him that "the mills of the gods grind late," he spoke it in a way one utters, off-hand, any maxim to which one does not attach any real significance. In the meantime life verified it in a manner fabulous but nevertheless logical. For as a fable only appeared the transformation of Hanka into Miss Anney, but that Miss Anney desired to see the man, whom, as a child, she loved in her first transports of love and the place which bound her with so many memories, tender and sad, was a matter natural and intelligible. And, of course, she could not return to Jastrzeb and stay under the Krzycki roof-tree otherwise than under a changed name. And thus it happened; and the later events rolled on with their own force until they reached the moment when it was necessary to reveal the secret. Gronski knew already from Pani Otocka everything which she could tell him and absolved from all sin her as well as Miss Anney. Nevertheless, he understood that an unprecedented situation was created, and such a knot was twisted that the untangling of it was impossible to foresee. It could only be untwined by Krzycki, and even he stood not only in the presence of new difficulties but, as it were, in the presence of a new person.

II

THE very next day after the escape from the police Pauly visited Laskowicz and afterwards called to see him as often as she could find leisure time, selecting, nevertheless, hours when Swidwicki was not at home. But this did not present great difficulties as Swidwicki usually rose about noon, after which he went away and did not return until late at night. The girl was not induced to make these frequent visits by any sentimentality nor exceptional benevolence for the young student. She even felt, particularly in the first moments, that she could despise him. But women love in general to look at close range at their good deeds and to behold, even daily, the people for whom they have become providential angels; and again Laskowicz, with every word, disclosed to her worlds of whose existence she heretofore had never guessed. About socialists thus far she knew almost nothing, except what a certain old female cook once told her, that "they do not believe in God and do not eat ducks"; and she only heard that they threw bombs and shot from revolvers. After the attack upon Krzycki howsoever much she, together with all the servants in Jastrzeb, was convinced that it was perpetrated by Rzeslewo men, nevertheless, the supposition that it might have been the socialists reached her ears, and then she was inflamed against them with a temporary ungovernable hatred. But now she was learning that they were people of an entirely different stamp. She did not yet understand what in general they wanted, but understood in particular that those people desired that she,

Paulina Kielkowna, should be a kind of lady like Miss Anney or Pani Otocka. And as a bee sips juice from flowers, so she, from the words of the young fanatic, extracted nourishment for her envy, her pain, her feelings. Her heart began to draw her towards that "Party," which appeared to her as a Providence and as a power; and to this was joined the purely feminine curiosity of the awful secrets of that power. Laskowicz quickly observed that the seed fell upon fit soil; and when once, for uttering inadvertently a disparaging word against Krzycki, the girl almost scratched out his eyes, he surmised her secret and determined to exploit her, not only for the good of the cause but also for his own personal ends.

Although Pauly was not the servant of Pani Otocka but of Miss Anney, she nevertheless dwelt in the same house; so he could, through her, secure news of Marynia, which he craved with all his soul; he could quiet his fears as to Krzycki's intentions, could speak of her and hear her name; and finally could gain information as to when and where he could see her, though from a distance. And he questioned Panna Pauly about all this; at first cautiously and casually, afterwards more and more, and at last so incessantly that this began to surprise and anger her. Prone to extremes, and more capable of hatred than affection, she worshipped, by way of exception, Marynia, regarding her as a sort of supernal being, and this worship in her was as violent as was her hatred. On the other hand, on the ideal path, in the direction of universal equality and dislike of the higher classes she made in a brief time considerable progress. She could not however, cast off at once her former notions, and she frequently had sudden relapses to them. Hence at one time, when Laskowicz as usual began to hurl questions at her about Panna Marynia, she answered him testily:

"Why are you always talking about Panna Zbyltowska?"

"Perhaps I am in love with her," retorted the student, knitting his brow.

At this her eyes in a moment blazed with rage.

"What more yet?"

And he began to peer at her keenly and asked:

"Why does the little lady say 'what more yet'?"

"For you are as suited for her as I am —"

And she paused abruptly, but he finished:

"To Pan Krzycki, for instance."

Then she burst into a greater rage yet.

"Why do you meddle in matters that do not concern you?"

"I do not meddle in anything. I say only if the little lady fell in love with him and if I, hearing of it, said 'What more yet?' that would be disagreeable to the little lady? And it would be justly disagreeable. For if the priests prate that it is permissible to love even God, why not a human being? It is permissible for the little lady, it is permissible for me, it is permissible for everybody, for that is the law of nature and therefore our law."

The words seconded that which was hidden in the girl's heart too much for her anger to remain, so she only glanced at Laskowicz, as if in sorrow, and replied:

"Eh! Much good will come of that law!"

"It will come or not come, in time. After all, if we adjusted the world in our own way, no dog would bark at such things. Is not the little lady worthy of Krzycki? Why not? Is it because he is richer? That is just what we are trying to prevent. Then what? Education? Lady, spit upon it. That education you can teach to a monkey. It is he, if the little lady wanted him, who ought yet to kiss the little lady's feet."

But she again became impatient and replied:

"Idle talk."

"I also want only to say that in case I should fall in

love with Panna Marynia and the little lady with Krzycki, our lot would be identical and the wrong the same."

"Wrong in what?"

"In the vile institutions of this world; in this, that such riff-raff as ourselves are permitted to love only to suffer, and we are not allowed to raise our eyes even upon the bourgeoisie, even though the hearts within should whine like dogs."

"True," answered the girl through set teeth. "But what of it?"

"This: that we ought to give to each other our hands, as brother and sister, and not be angry at each other, but assist one another. Who knows whether one may not be of service to the other?"

"Eh! In what way can we help each other?"

And he again began to gaze fixedly at her with his eyes set so closely to each other and said, uttering each word slowly:

"I do not know whether Krzycki is in love with Panna Marynia or with that Englishwoman whom the little lady serves; or perhaps with neither of them."

In one moment Pauly's face was covered with a pallor; afterwards a flame passed over it, which in turn gave way to pallor. In her soul there might have been dumb fears, but up to that time she had dared not put to herself any questions. Those ladies were entertained in Jastrzeb as guests. Pani Otocka and Panna Marynia were Krzycki's relatives; therefore there was nothing unusual in their relations. On the other hand, when the "Englishwoman" in Jastrzeb drove for the doctor and later nursed the wounded man, that was a time when the heart of the girl raged with jealousy and uneasiness. Afterwards she was placated by the thought that such a young nobleman would not wed a foreign "intruder," no matter how wealthy, but, at present, jealousy pierced her like a knife.

Laskowicz continued:

"The little lady asked in what way we can help one another, did she not?"

"Yes."

"At least in — revenge."

After which, he changed the conversation.

"Let the little lady come to me and, if I sometimes inquire about anything, let her not get angry. If at times it is hard for her, it is not easy for me. One lot, one wrong. Let the little lady come. I do not want to live with Swidwicki any longer. He is a peculiar man. I know that he did not take me out of the goodness of his heart, but as he placed himself in peril on my account I must endure everything from him. In the meantime he so maligns our party that I feel an impulse to shoot him in the head or stab him with a knife."

"Why do you argue with that old goat?"

"Because he talks and I must listen. Often he goads me into a reply. Somebody else for lesser things would get a knife under the ribs."

"But I will not be able to hide you a second time, for I do not know where."

"No. I myself will find some sort of hole; I have already thought of that. Our people will help. I now have a passport and am bleached yellow on the head. Some of my associates could not recognize me. Even if I am caught they will not try me as Laskowicz but as Zaranczko of Bessarabia, unless some one should betray me, but such there is not among us."

"Only be careful, sir, and when you know where to hide, let me know. I will not betray."

"I know, I know; such do not betray."

After which he suddenly asked:

"Why does not the little lady want to agree that we should call each other 'associates'? Amongst us we all speak that way."

But she rebuffed him at once.

"I told you once I cannot endure that."

"Ah, if it is so, then it is hard."

Pauly began to prepare for home. Laskowicz on the leave-taking made a second departure from the customs governing his associates, for he kissed her hand. Previously he had noticed that this raised her in her own eyes; that it flattered her and brought her into a good humor. Although not by nature over-intelligent, he observed that the principles of the Party alone would not entirely hold her, and that he would have in that girl an aid capable of all extremes, but only so far as her own personality entered into the play. This lowered the opinion which he held of her and his gratitude to her. He nevertheless submitted to this despotism, remembering that he owed to her his life.

At present he had, besides, a favor to ask of her; so at the door he kissed her hand a second time and said:

"Panna Pauly — the same lot, the same wrong. Let the little lady answer yet one more question. Where can I see though from a distance — though from a distance —"

"Whom?" she asked, knitting her brows.

"Panna Marynia."

"If from a distance, then I will tell," she replied reluctantly. "The little lady is to play for the starving working people and at noon goes to the rehearsals."

"Alone?"

"No, with Pani Otocka or with my mistress; but sometimes with one of us servants."

"Thank you."

"But only from a distance — do you understand, sir, — for otherwise you will fare badly."

And after these words, which sounded like a menace, she left him. The next moment Laskowicz heard through the door Swidwicki's voice and laughter, after

which something resembling a scuffle, a suppressed scream, and — the sound of hasty footsteps on the stairs; finally Swidwicki stumbled into the room, drunk.

"What were you doing here?" he asked.

"Nothing," answered Laskowicz.

And he began to scan the room, evidently desiring to satisfy himself whether he could not detect some signs of disorder, and repeated:

"Nothing!"

"I give you my word of honor," the student exclaimed with energy.

At this Swidwicki leered at him, fingering his disheveled beard and said:

"Then you are a fool!"

After which he flung himself upon the sofa, for he had partaken of a sumptuous breakfast and was sleepy.

III

LASKOWICZ'S extreme fanaticsm could not in reality harmonize with the extreme cynical scepticism of Swidwicki, who in addition took advantage of the situation not only beyond measure, but to the point of cruelty. He himself spoke of it and boasted about it to Gronski, when he met him in the restaurant, to which Gronski went after Krzycki's removal.

"I have enough of my revolutionary maggot," he said, "I have enough of him, especially since I have satisfied myself that personally he is honest and will not pilfer any money from my pocket-book. From that time he has bored me. As for harboring such a simpleton one might go to Siberia. I regarded it in the beginning as a species of sport. I thought I would have a permanent sensation of a certain anxiety and, in the meantime, I have not experienced anything of the kind... The only satisfaction which I have is to point out to him his own stupidity and that of his party. By that I drive him to rabidness."

"But that he cares to argue with you—"

"He does not want to but is unable to restrain himself. His temperament and fanaticism carry him away."

"At one time I met a similar individual," answered Gronski, "and not very long ago — out in the country, in Jastrzeb. He was a student, a tutor of Stas, whom Krzycki later discharged because he incited the field hands and was an agitator among peasants of the neighborhood."

"Ah," ejaculated, with a strange smile, Swidwicki, to whom it occurred that Pauly also was at Jastrzeb.

"What? Why do you smile?" asked Gronski.

"Oh, nothing. Speak further."

"I rode with him once to the city and on the way had quite a chat with him."

"According to your habit."

"According to my habit. Now among empty phrases, which only dull minds would accept as genuine coin, he said some interesting things. I learned a little about the angle from which they view the world."

"My maggot at times says interesting things. Yesterday I led him into the admission that socialists of the pure water regard as their greatest enemies the peasants and the radical members of the bourgeoisie. I began to pour oil on the fire and he unbosomed himself. An unsophisticated peasant aspires to ownership, and that aspiration the devil cannot eradicate, and as to the bourgeoisie he spoke thus: 'What harm,' he said, 'do these few nobles and priests who infest the world do to us? Our enemy is the bourgeois, rich or poor. Our enemy is the radical, who thinks that as soon as he shouts that he does not believe in God and priests that he buys us. Our enemy is that boaster, who speaks in the name of the common people and is ready to tickle us under the armpits, so that we should smile on him. He is the one who fawns on us, like a dog at a roll of butter, and preserves all the instincts of a bourgeois.' And he chattered further until I said: 'Hold on! Why, you are with the radicals "fratres Helenae!" And he to this: 'That is not true! The radical, wealthy bourgeois, who from fear dyes in red and borrows the standard and methods from us, introduces confusion in minds and drabbles in the mud our idea; and the poor one, if he annually saves even the smallest amount, injures us for he offers to work at a lower price than the pure proletaire, who always is as poor as Job. We,' he said, 'will put the knife, above all things, to the throats of the bourgeois for latent treachery lurks in him.' Thus he chat-

tered and I was willing to concede justice to him, if in general I believed in justice, but I did not concede it yet for another reason, and that is, he is too stupid to have reasoned out such things. It was evident that he repeated what others taught him. In fact I did not neglect to tell him so."

Further discussion was interrupted by the arrival of Dolhanski who, observing Gronski, approached him, although he disliked to meet Swidwicki.

"How are you?" he said, "My ladies took a trip to Czestochowo; so I am free. Will you permit me to be seated with you?"

"Certainly, certainly. Why, these are your last days."

"It would be worth while even for that reason to drink a little bottle," observed Swidwicki, "particularly as it is, besides, my birthday."

"If the calendar was a wine-cellar and the dates in it bottles, then your birthday would occur every day," answered Gronski.

"I swear to you upon everything at which I jeer, that, contrary to my habit and inclination, this time I speak the truth."

Saying this, he nodded to the waiter and ordered him to bring two bottles, calculating that afterwards more would be forthcoming. In the meantime Dolhanski said:

"I met Krzycki to-day. He looks poorly; somehow not himself, and he told me that he does not live with you but in a hotel. Did you by chance quarrel?"

"No. But he moved away from me and Pani Krzycki from Pani Otocka's."

"There is some kind of epidemic," exclaimed Swidwicki, "for my cutthroat is leaving me."

"Perhaps something has passed between Krzycki and Miss Anney," said Dolhanski. "I supposed that they were getting quite intimate. Did they part — or what?"

"A marchpane, that Englishwoman," interrupted Swidwicki; "but her maid has more electricity in her."

Gronski hesitated for a while; after which he said:

"No, they have not parted, but something has occurred. I do not know why I should make a secret of that which, sooner or later, you will find out. It has developed that Miss Anney is not the born, but adopted, child of the rich English manufacturer, lately deceased, Mr. Anney, and of his late wife."

"Well, if the adoption gives her all the rights, and particularly the right of inheritance, is it not all the same to Krzycki?"

"The adoption gives her all rights; nevertheless it is not entirely the same to Krzycki, for it appears that Miss Anney is the daughter of a blacksmith of Rzeslewo and is named Hanka Skibianka."

"Ha!" cried Swidwicki, "Perdita has been found but not the king's daughter. What does the pretty Florizel say to this?"

But Dolhanski began to stare at Gronski as if he saw him for the first time in his life.

"What are you saying?"

"The actual fact."

"Sapristi! But that is a nursery tale. Sapristi! You are joking."

"I give you my word it is so. She herself told that to Krzycki."

"I like that expression of astonishment on Dolhanski's face," exclaimed Swidwicki. "Man, come to yourself."

Dolhanski restrained himself, for he always proclaimed that a true gentleman never should be surprised.

"I remember now," he said, "that this is the Skibianka to whom Uncle Zarnowski bequeathed a few thousand roubles."

"The same."

"Therefore his daughter."

"Fancy to yourself otherwise. Skiba came from Galicia to Rzeslowo with a wife and a child a few years old."

"Therefore of pure peasant blood."

"A Piast's[1], a Piast's," cried Swidwicki.

"Absolutely pure," answered Gronski.

"And what does Laudie say?"

"He swallowed the tidings and is trying to digest them," again blurted out Swidwicki.

"That substantially is the case. He found himself in a new situation and locked himself up. It dumfounded him a little, and he desires to come to himself."

"He was enamoured to the point of ludicrousness but now he will probably break off."

"I do not admit that, but I repeat, that, in view of the changed situation, he has fallen into a certain internal strife, which he must first quell."

"I candidly confess that I would break off all relations unconditionally."

"But if Kaska or Hanka had a hundred thousand pounds?" asked Swidwicki.

"In such a case — I would have fallen into a strife," answered Dolhanski, phlegmatically.

After a while he continued:

"For it seems that it is nothing, but in life it may appear to be something. Omitting the various cousins, 'Mats' and 'Jacks,' who undoubtedly will be found; there also will be found dissimilar instincts, dissimilar dispositions, and dissimilar tastes. Why, the deuce! I would not want a wife who suddenly might be ruled by an unexpected passion for amber rosaries, for shelling peas, for swingling flax, for picking fruit, or for gathering mushrooms, not to say berries and nuts, and walking barefooted."

[1] Piast; the name of the first King of Poland, who was a peasant.

Here he turned to Gronski.

"Shrug your shoulders, but it is so."

"That would not shock me," said Swidwicki, "only, if I were to marry Miss Anney, I would just stipulate that she at times should go about barefooted. When I am in the country, nothing affects me so much as the sight of the bare feet of girls. It is true that they often have erysipelas about the ankles, which comes from the prickle of the stubblefields. But I assume that Miss Anney has not got erysipelas."

"One cannot talk with you in a dignified manner."

"Why?" replied Swidwicki. "Let Krzycki now clip coupons from his dignity but not we. Did you say that he belongs to the National Democrats?"

"No, not I. But what connection has that with Miss Anney?"

"Oh, — oh, a nobleman — a National Democrat — has found out that his flame has peasant blood in her veins and nevertheless his belly on that account has begun to ache; nevertheless, he is stung by that deminutio capitis."

"Who told you that? Besides, it should be permutatio, not deminutio."

"Yes! The English wares take on the appearance of a domestic product and fall in value. Justly, justly."

"Do you know who could with perfect independence enter into a marriage under such conditions?" asked Dolhanski. "A truly great gentlemen."

"But not Polish," exclaimed Swidwicki.

"There you are already beginning! Why not Polish?"

"Because a Polish gentleman has not sufficient faith in his own blood; he plainly has not sufficient pride to believe that he will elevate a woman to himself and not lower himself to her."

Gronski began to laugh:

"I did not expect that charge from your lips," he said.

"Why? I am an individualist, and in so far as I do not regard myself as a specimen of the basest race, so far do I regard myself as a specimen of the best. According to me one belongs to the aristocracy only through lucky chance; that is, when one brings into the world a suitable profile and corresponding brain. But Dolhanski, for instance, in so far as he has not purchased portraits of ancestors at an auction — and our other gentlemen — judge that blood constitutes that appurtenance. Now granting these premises, I contend that our tories do not know how to be proud of their blood."

"At home," said Gronski, "you vent your spleen upon the socialists, and here you wish to vent it upon the aristocracy."

"That does not diminish my merits. I have a few pretty remarks for the National Democracy."

"I know, I know. But how will you prove that which you said about the Polish tories?"

"How will I prove it? By the Socratic method — with the aid of questions. Did you ever observe when a Polish gentleman abroad becomes acquainted with a Frenchman or Englishman? I, while I had money, passed winters in Nice or in Cairo and saw a number of them. Now, every time I propounded to myself the question which now I put to you: why the devil it is not the Frenchman or Englishman who tries to please the Pole, but the Pole them? Why is it that only the Pole fawns, only the Pole coquets? Because he is almost ashamed of his descent; and if by chance a Frenchman tells him that from his accent he took him for a Frenchman, or an Englishman takes him for an Englishman, then he melts with joy, like butter in a frying-pan! Ah, I have seen such coquettes by the score — and it is an old story. Such coquetry, for instance, Stanislaus Augustus[1] possessed. At home, the Polish

[1] Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski, the last king of Poland.

gentleman at times knows how to hold his nose high. Before a foreigner he is on both paws. Is not that a lack of pride in his own race, in his own blood, in his own traditions? If you have the slightest grain of a sense of justice, even though no larger than the grain of caviar, you must admit the justice of my remarks. As to myself, I have been ashamed sometimes that I am a Pole."

"That means that you committed the same sin with which you charge others," replied Gronski. "If the tips of the wings of our eagle reached both seas, as at one time they did, perhaps Poles might be different. But at present — tell me — of what are they to be proud?"

"You are twisting things. I am speaking of racial pride only, not political," answered Swidwicki. "After all, may the devils take them. I prefer to drink."

"Say what you will," asserted Dolhanski, "but I will merely tell you this: if internal affairs were exclusively in their hands, some fooleries might take place, but we would not be fried in the sauce in which we are fried to-day."

Swidwicki turned to him with eyes glistening already a little abnormally.

"My dear sir," he said, "in order to govern a country it is necessary to have one of three things: either the greatest number, which the canaille has behind it — I beg pardon, I should have said the Democracy — or the greatest sound sense, which nobody amongst us possesses, or the most money, which the Jews have. And as I have demonstrated that our great gentlemen do not even have any sentiment of traditions, therefore what have they?"

"At least good manners, which you lack," retorted Dolhanski with aversion.

"No. I will tell you what they have — if not all of them, then the second or third one: but I will tell it to you in a whisper, so as not to shock Gronski's virgin ears."

And leaning over to Dolhanski, he whispered a word to him, after which he snorted, maliciously:

"I do not say that that is nothing, but it is not sufficient to govern the country with."

But Dolhanski frowned and said:

"If that is so, then you surely belong to the highest aristocracy."

"Of course! certainly! I have a diploma certified a few years ago in Aix-la-chapelle, the place of the coronation!"

Saying this, he again quaffed his wine and continued with a kind of feverish gayety:

"Ah, permit me to rail, permit me to scoff at men and things! I always do that internally but at times I must expectorate the gall. Permit me! For after all, I am a Pole, and for a Pole there perhaps cannot be a greater pleasure than defacing, belittling, pecking at, calumniating, spitting on, and pulling down statues from the pedestals. Republican tradition, is it not? In addition Providence so happily arranged it that a Pole loves that the most, and when he himself is concerned, he feels it most acutely. A delightful society!"

"You are mistaken," replied Gronski, "for in that respect we have changed prodigiously and in proof of it, I will cite one instance: When the painter Limiatycki received for his 'Golgotha' a grand medal in Paris, all the local little brushes at once fumed at him. So meeting him, I asked him whether he intended to retaliate, and he replied to me with the greatest serenity: 'I am serving my fatherland and art, but only stupidity cannot understand that, while only turpitude will not understand it.' And he was right, for whoever has any kind of wings at his shoulders and can raise himself a little in the air, need not pay attention to the mud of the streets."

"Tut, tut; mud is a purely native product, the same as other symptoms of your national culture, namely: filth,

scandals, envy, folly, indolence, big words and little deeds, cheap politics, brawling, a relish for mass-meetings, banditism, revolvers, and bombs; if I wanted to mention everything I would not finish until late at night."

"Then I will throw in for you a few more things," said Gronski; "drunkenness, cynicism, a stupid pose of despair, thoughtless hypercriticism, scoffing at misfortune, fouling one's own nest, spitting at blood and suffering, undermining faith in the future, and blasphemy against the nation. Have you yet enough?"

"I have not enough of wine. Order some more, order some more!"

"I will not order any more wine, but I will tell yet more, that you err in claiming that these are native products. They are brought by a certain wind which evidently has fanned you."

But Swidwicki, who this time had no desire to quarrel but did have a desire to drink, evidently wishing to change the subject of the conversation, unexpectedly exclaimed:

"Apropos of winds, what a pity that such sensible people as the Prussians commit one gross blunder."

Gronski, who had already risen to bid him farewell, was overcome temporarily by curiosity.

"What blunder?" he asked.

"That they assume super-villeiny to be superhumanity."

"In this you are right."

"I feel a contempt for myself as often as I am right."

"Then we will leave you with your wine and your contempt."

Saying this, Gronski nodded to Dolhanski and they departed. Swidwicki's last words, however, caused him to reflect; so after a while he said:

"Now r ople's minds are haunted by the Prussians and they are reminded of them by the slightest cause. After all, Swidwicki's description of them was apposite."

"If you knew how little I am interested in Swidwicki's descriptions."

"Nevertheless, you vie with him and talk in a similar strain," answered Gronski.

After which, pursuing further the train of his thoughts, he said:

"Nietzsche also did not perceive that the susceptibility and appreciation of other people's woes becomes manifest only upon the culmination of the creative. . ."

"Good, good, but at this moment I am more interested in what Krzycki is going to do about Miss Anney."

Dolhanski, who could not endure Swidwicki, would have been sorely afflicted, if he had suspected that the same question occurred to the latter's mind.

Remaining alone, Swidwicki recalled Gronski's recital and began to laugh, as the thought of such unusual complications amused him immensely. He imagined to himself what excitement must have prevailed at Krzycki's and at Pani Otocka's, and how far the affair would agitate the circles of their relatives and acquaintances. And suddenly he began to soliloquize in the following manner:

"And if I paid Miss Anney a visit? It even behooves me to leave her a card. That would be eminently proper. I may not find her in — that does not matter much, but if I should find her in, I will try to see whether her legs are not too bulky at the ankles. For culture, education, even polish may be acquired, but delicate ligaments of the legs and hands it is necessary to inherit through a whole series of generations. That furious Pauly, nevertheless, has a sufficiently thin ligature. The devil, however, knows who her father was. I will go. If I do not find one, I shall find the other."

And he went. He was admitted not by the man-servant but by Pauly; so he smiled at her in his most ingratiating manner and said:

"Good-day, pretty fennel-flower! Is Panna Hanka Skibianka at home?"

"What Hanka Skibianka?" she asked in surprise.

"Then, the little lady does not know the great tidings?"

'What great tidings? I do not know any."

"That the mistress of the little lady is not named Miss Anney?"

"Do not upset our heads."

"I give the little lady my word of honor. Ask Pan Gronski, or Pan Krzycki, who is chewing off his fingers from mortification. I give you my word of honor. I also could tell you more, but if the little lady is not curious I will go. Here is my card for Panna Ski-bian-ka."

The eyes of the girl sparkled with curiosity. She took the card mechanically.

"I do not say that you should go, but I do not believe," she said hurriedly.

"And I know yet more."

"What is it?"

"I will whisper it in your ear."

It did not occur to Pauly that there was no necessity for Swidwicki speaking in a whisper. She leaned towards him with a palpitating heart and, though he flooded her with his breath, saturated with the odor of wine, she did not withdraw her head.

"What is it?" she repeated.

"That Panna Skibianka is a peasant woman from Zarnow!"

"That is untrue!"

"As I love God."

And, saying this, he suddenly smacked her ear with a broad kiss.

IV

Miss Anney's letter bore the impress of extraordinary simplicity. At the beginning she said that from the moment when he proposed for her hand she was compelled to reveal her former name; while in the continuation it contained an equally simple account of herself and her family from the time of their departure from Rzeslewo. This sad course of events she related in the following words:

"My father came from Galicia and had in America relatives of whom he heard that through labor they had amassed fortunes. Learning of this, he decided to settle there also and seek his fortune beyond the ocean. We left Rzeslewo at a time when you were in Warsaw. I knew how to write as I was taught that in the manor-house, and would have informed you about this if I had known your address. We went, not saying anything to anybody, to Hamburg, and at that place there occurred what often happens to peasant emigrants. The agent tricked us, defrauded us of our money, and placed us on a vessel bound not for America but for England. Thrown upon the pavements of London, we soon fell into dire want. For the passage to America there now was no means. My mother died of typhoid fever in a hospital and father, from despair and nostalgia, declined rapidly in health. Under these circumstances we were found by Mr. Anney, one of the best and noblest men in the world, a friend and patron of the Poles, who gave us employment. But the succor came too late, and my father died in the course of a year. I remained in the factory and worked in it until the acci-

dent which changed my status entirely. The Anney family had only one child, a daughter, whom they loved beyond everything in the world and surrounded with a solicitude all the greater because she was threatened by a pulmonary ailment. Once it happened that Miss Anney, while visiting the factory, was almost carried away by the driving-wheel of the machinery. I rushed to her assistance, imperilling a little my own life, and from that time the gratitude of the Anney family for me had no bounds. They took me from the factory to themselves, and in this manner I became the companion and afterwards the bosom friend of their daughter. A Pole, an emigrant of the year '63, a friend of Mr. Anney and a man well educated, taught us both, and me, separately, in Polish. I endeavored to benefit, as much as lay in my power, from these lessons, and after two years was able to approach a little the intellectual plane of my friend and my environment. But Agnes — for such was the Christian name of Miss Anney — began to fail in her health. Then Mr. Anney sold his factory and we all, including our instructor, removed to Italy. There about three years were passed in a search for the best climate for our dearest patient. All efforts proved unavailing, however, as God took His angel unto Himself. After Agnes' death, the Anneys, remembering that I loved with my whole soul our dead one, adopted me as their own child and gave me not only their family name, but desiring to overcome their despair, suffering, and sorrow, even the Christian name of the deceased. Nevertheless, the sorrow could not be overcome, and though I tried with my whole heart to be to them some sort of comfort in life, in the course of two years both followed their greatest love.

"And this is the end of my history. And after that came those events which brought me nearer to you; therefore I desire to justify my conduct in your eyes. I have a right to the name which I bear, and my life from the time of the

departure from Rzeslewo has been pure. Conscience reproaches me with only one new error. This was that I did not confess to the Anneys that I already was unworthy of their care. But for such a confession I lacked strength. I loved too much my Agnes and feared that they would separate me from her. Later I did not want to add to their affliction. I did not have the strength. At times, also, I think that now when they look upon me from heaven and see everything, they forgive me for keeping that secret. Beyond this I once more repeat and swear that my life has been pure. But in my memory I have only coffins and coffins, and of my Rzeslewo days there remains to me only the recollection of you. I could not forget either my sin or my happiness. Often during the life of my adopted sister, while gazing into her chaste eyes, I struggled with remorse, and at the same time I wept from intense longing. After that, being left alone in the world, I had nothing to cherish in my heart, and I began to yearn yet more. When, after the death of the Anneys, I became acquainted and grew intimate with Zosia Otocka in Brussels, I accidentally learned from a conversation that she was your relative. Then I related to her my entire life, not concealing anything, and she not only did not spurn me, but loved me yet more. Emboldened by her goodness, I confessed to her my longing for the old days and Rzeslewo. Perhaps it may be a new fault on my part that I confided to Zosia my insurmountable desire of seeing yet once more in my life, Jastrzeb, Rzeslewo, and — why should I not state the whole truth? — and you. Then Zosia said to me: 'I understand you; ride with me to Jastrzeb as Miss Anney, as you cannot do otherwise. Nobody will recognize you and you will take a reckoning with your own heart. Perhaps reality may extinguish the rainbow of recollections. If they are assuaged forever, so much the better for you; if he should fall in love with you, so

much the worse for him; if your former echoes reawaken, then we will assume that this was predestination.' Such was Zosia's advice, and for that reason, when your mother invited her and Marynia, I also accompanied them to Jastrzeb. But I do not wish to pass for any better than I am. I confess hat on the road I always had in mind Zosia's words: 'If he falls in love with you, so much the worse for him,' and I wished that to happen. I was certain that you had entirely forgotten me, and I thought that if now you fell in love with me without any requital, that it would be a sort of condign punishment for your forgetfulness and a kind of triumph for myself and — if not such a womanly revenge as books tell of,— at least a great solace to my self-love. But it happened otherwise, for I forgot to take into account that I had a heart, not of foreign books, but of a Polish village — simple and faithful. When I saw Rzeslewo, Jastrzeb, and you, I wanted only to weep and weep, as I wept at Pan Zarnowski's funeral, and I discovered within me that Hanka, who years before loved you with her first childish love and afterwards with such affection, did not love any one else. You know, sir, what happened further. If you do not return, I will not bear any resentment towards you, but do not harbor any ill-will against me. I, too, merely skirted along the rim of happiness."

The signature was "Hanka." Ladislaus' chin quivered from time to time while he was reading the letter and his eyes grew dim. He began to repeat the signature "Hanka, Hanka." He rose abruptly and paced over the room with big steps. His thoughts rolled into a ball in his head like clouds in the heavens; they collected and scattered in all directions like a startled stud of horses on the wild steppes of the Ukraine. He read the letter a second and third time, and under its influence there began to glide before his eyes pictures of the past as distinct as if all that which

occurred some time ago had happened but yesterday. He recalled those bright moonlight nights when he stole away to the mill, and that village girl, fragrant with the hay, who, to the question of whether she loved him, whispered in reply, "Of course," and threw her yet half-childish arms around his neck and hugged him to her breast with such strength that no other love could make a sincerer avowal. He recollected that he nevertheless loved her at that time, and when he missed her, longed for her, and even inquired of the people about the blacksmith's family — but with reserve and faint-heartedly, as fear closed his lips.

Subsequently that girl was erased from his memory so completely that even the light pangs of conscience which he felt on her account vanished; nothing remained. It was well with him in the world and he sought new sensations, while she was seized by the whirlwind of life and was hurled like a wretched leaf upon a foreign land, where she suffered from sheer starvation. Nevertheless, neither at that time, nor later, when good people took care of her, did she forget him nor did she cease to long for him. Ladislaus was not a deep connoisseur of the human soul; he felt, nevertheless, that what for him was simply a love adventure, a shallow enjoyment of the senses, a transient impression which disperses to the winds like the fragrance of flowers, for her became a new life; a surrender of her whole being and whole soul, too pure and too noble for her to seek a new happiness upon new paths. And now he understood why that coveted Miss Anney of to-day, charming as a dream, brilliant, surrounded by affluence and arousing admiration, wrote to him that she had a heart not of foreign books but of a Polish village — simple and faithful. He understood also why the letter was signed "Hanka." Suddenly and irrevocably were banished all his suspicions, and her words, "my life from the moment of the departure from Rzeslewo has been pure," touched

him to the extent that he began to upbraid himself that he should for a moment have thought that it could have been otherwise. At once he seemed to himself to be little, mean, and unworthy of that noble and exalted soul. But through his heart and head there coursed during the last moments so many thoughts, impressions, and feelings that he was uncertain whether the final sensibility of his own shortcomings and wretchedness would be lasting. Nevertheless, he was seized with an ever-increasing tenderness, and more and more became obliterated that difference between Hanka and Miss Anney which was so irritating to him in the first moments. Now, on the contrary, the recollection that this simple girl of old and that fascinating lady of to-day were one and the same woman penetrated him with a kind of thrill, resembling a thrill of joy. The memory that at one time he possessed the other began to waken in him, as it were, a hunger and a new passion for the present one, and the thought of her charms intensified the play of his young blood. But he strove to stifle within him those impressions with the consciousness of the responsibilities which were imposed upon him. Above all things he propounded to himself the question, What should a man of honor do who had betrayed and therefore wronged a girl, almost a child, who was in love with him, and later, after a few years, met her under a changed name and fell in love with her? There was only one answer; even if he did not fall in love, if her love continued, he ought to assume all the consequences of his acts. If she remained a simple-minded rustic who never could understand him, or if she had deviated from the path of rectitude, even in such a case, it would not, for his vexed soul, be sufficient reason for washing his hands and withdrawing from the affair; and so much the more, since the girl had bridged the intellectual and social chasm which separated them, and in addition ennobled her own soul and had not ceased

to love. "Yes it is so. I would spit in my own eyes," said Ladislaus (not thinking at that moment that in practice an act like that would be a trifle difficult to perform), "if I hesitated any longer. There is only one thing to do and I will do that at once." Having formed this resolution, he took a deep breath like a man, from whose heart a heavy load has fallen — and as much as he at first became little in his own eyes, so now he began to gain in stature. He did not, however, propound the question, what would happen if Miss Anney did not have such wondrous eyes, gazing with a heavenly streak, nor such a countenance, whose color reminded him of the petals of a white rose, nor those other charms which attracted his eyes. He said to himself that many of his acquaintances could not afford to form a similar resolution; he was pleased with himself; and that it was easier for him to do so because he was impelled thereto by his heart and senses, he deemed not as lessening the worthiness of the act itself, but as his own good fortune. He foresaw, however, that he would yet have to do with his mother as well as with the so called opinion of society, which is not concerned about principles but only about gossip, and which seeks, above all things, food for its own stupid malice. But he expected to reconcile his mother, and as to the malicious, smiling ironically upon the slightest provocation, his nostrils, distended at the very thought, and his clenched teeth boded them no good. But this anticipated knightly action was a matter of the future; in the meantime his impetuous nature urged him to immediate action. He determined to go to his mother at once and definitely come to an understanding with her. Glancing, however, at his watch, he became aware of the fact that it was almost three o'clock in the morning. In view of this, that was impossible. Not feeling, however, the least need of sleep, and desiring absolutely to do something, he sat down to

write letters. First, he inclosed Miss Anney's letter in an envelope, because he wanted to send it to his mother before the decisive interview took place; after which he started to write to Miss Anney, but soon stopped, as it occurred to him that since he gave his word that he would remain silent for a week, he did not have the right to do it. Instead, after a brief deliberation, he wrote a few words to Pani Otocka, praying that she would permit him to visit her that day.

Finally, when the dawn began to peer into the room and mingle with the light of the lamps, he thought of repose, but though he felt great weariness, he could not fall asleep, and mentally he conversed with his mother and Miss Anney until sunrise. He fell into a sound slumber only when the morning bustle in the hotel began and did not awake until late. Dressing himself, he rang for the servant and ordered him to deliver Miss Anney's letter to his mother, but at the last minute he made up his mind to take it to her himself. But in the rooms engaged by his mother he found only the younger members of the family and the French governess, who informed him that "madame" went to church early in the morning.

V

Pani Krzycki had indeed gone to church and confession, for in the grief which befell her, she needed consolation and advice. And her grief was real and profound. She lived in times in which various ancient prejudices and prepossessions clashed, and were becoming more and more obliterated, yielding place to new democratic ideas. As she often heard that the wave of these new ideas might bring benefit and salvation to the country, she, notwithstanding that her habits and former conceptions conflicted with them, not only did not struggle against them, but quietly acquiesced in them in a passive manner. This was easier for her as it never occurred to her that personally she would ever have anything to do with them. For her it was the same as if somebody had installed modern furniture in a few rooms in Jastrzeb, which were not continually occupied. Let them stay there since fashion requires it and since in the other rooms there are old armchairs, heirlooms, in which one can rest comfortably. And now, suddenly she was ordered to move to that new part of the house; suddenly she was confronted by the fact that her son was in love with a peasant woman from Rzeslewo and was about to marry her. Then in the first moments everything within her was stirred up; the old instincts and customs began to cry out. That silent and passive acquiescence in the new ideas crumbled like a building of sand, and the whole course of events appeared to the indignant citizeness-noblewoman as an unworthy intrigue in which the victim to be sported with was her son and with him, the entire Krzycki family. Amazement that the chief

partner and almost author of this intrigue could be a being whom she regarded as the incarnation of all feminine virtues, and whom she desired her son should marry, only aggravated her anger. In vain did Zosia explain to her that her son was the betrayer of an innocent child and Miss Anney was an angel, and that in bringing her to Jastrzeb, she did not have any sinister designs and did only that which every other woman in her place, sympathizing with a wronged and longing woman, would have done. "If the most fervent wish of Miss Anney was to behold once more in her life the place in which her life was undone, and the man whom she could not forget and who was the author of her undoing, then it was due to her; and everybody who has the slightest heart ought to understand this. And let Aunt say," she continued, "whether I could betray her secret and whether an impossible situation would not have been created for her." The usually quiet and gentle Zosia became so wrought up in defence of her friend that she plainly told Pani Krzycki that even if Laudie fell in love with Miss Anney without any requital that it would be only what he deserved and, besides, since "Aninka" did not accept his proposal and gave him a week's time for consideration, he could withdraw it; in such case, however, "Aninka" would not be the only one whose respect he forfeited. But all this was pouring oil upon fire and only increased the ire of Pani Krzycki who declared that, at any rate, she and her son were victims of a plot. After which she moved to a hotel, announcing at the time of her departure that her feet would never again cross the threshold of that house.

Nevertheless, the bitterness and anger which accumulated in her heart were not directed against Pani Otocka alone. Her son also had wounded her heart deeply and awakened a whole series of painful recollections, connected with the memory of her husband. For her husband, a man

worshipped by her during the first years of their marital life for his manifold good qualities and extraordinary beauty, had caused her not a little mortification through his immoral life in relation to women in general and the female residents of Jastrzeb and its vicinity in particular. To Pani Krzycki it was no secret, that, in the course of long years, cows were led continually from the manor cow-houses as gifts or rather as rewards to various Kates and Marys and that in Jastrzeb could be found quite a number of step-brothers and step-sisters of her children. So she shed copious tears over this state of affairs until almost the last year of her husband's life. In her time she suffered in her own self-love and her womanly dignity as a wife and mother. Afterwards she forgave everything, but after the death of her husband, as a woman deeply religious, she lived in continual fear at the thought of the Divine Tribunal, before which the deceased appeared. For whole years she tried to supplicate for him forgiveness through tears, fasts, alms, and prayers. Above all she determined to bring up her son in such a manner that he would never fall into the errors of his father. She watched him in his boyhood days, like the eye in her head; she shielded him from all evil influences. After sending him to school she confided the care of him to her relative, a priest, and to Gronski, in whose morality she justly believed. And when the son grew up, when after finishing school, he attended the university, and afterwards assumed the management of the Jastrzeb estate, she had that bottomless, naïve faith, usual with women, upright and pious but unacquainted with the depravity of the world, that up to that time "Laudie" was as pure as a lily. And now unexpectedly the film over her eyes dropped. The son was following in the footsteps of his father. At this thought she was beset by despair. In her soul a protest truly vehement poured forth against the alliance of her son

with a peasant woman, but having a very sensitive conscience she felt, after her conversation with Zosia, that Miss Anney had some claim on Ladislaus. Once or twice, this manner of extricating themselves from an onerous situation suggested itself to her mind; that Ladislaus in pursuance of a prearranged compact should propose to Miss Anney and she should refuse him. "But do I know," she said to herself, "how many similar Hankas may already be found in Jastrzeb?" And a horror penetrated to the marrow of her bones at the thought that among those Hankas might be Ladislaus' step-sisters, for it seemed to her that the crimes of the father fatally dragged after them the yet greater crimes of the son and with them must follow damnation. "Ah, Laudie! ah, Laudie!" she repeated despondently, and she felt besides fear, such pain, such disappointment of heart and such profound resentment, that however much she understood that it was necessary to summon Ladislaus as soon as possible and ascertain how he had received the news that Miss Anney is Hanka and what he intended to do, nevertheless she could not persuade herself to see him at once. After removing from Pani Otocka's, the information that he was not at the hotel afforded her true relief. She immediately locked herself up in her room and determined, if he called, not to admit him.

The following morning she went to church and to confession and after confession she begged her relative, the prelate, the same who in his time had charge of Ladislaus, for advice. Already she was calmer. The aged prelate received her and began with extraordinary particularity to question her about Miss Anney, her stay at Jastrzeb, about the course of events after the attempt on Ladislaus' life, and about the details in Hanka's life, of which Pani Krzycki had learned from Zosia: afterwards about the fears of Pani Krzycki herself, and finally after a long silence he said:

"As to the sins, which Ladislaus, after this, the first sin of his youth, might have committed, that is only a conjecture, and a fear, and as we have no irrefutable proofs of them, we should not take them into account at all. There only remains the former Hanka and the Miss Anney of to-day. It is only with this one case that we have to do. So I desire to know how you, as a mother, regard her."

Pani Krzycki replied that she knew perfectly well that all people in the sight of God were equal, but she was concerned about the happiness of her son. Similar marriages were not usually happy. It may be that the reason for this is the malice of the world: it may be that the wife met with humiliation on the part of vain and malicious persons, but the husband must feel that also, in consequence of which irritation ensues and the relations grow from bad to worse even without any ill-will on either side. As to her son he is ambitious and sensitive as but few are, and even if he loved his wife most strongly, he would suffer if any one evinced towards her even a shade of disdain. Whoever lives in the world must reckon with everything, even with stupidity, even with malice, not to say with other considerations upon which marital happiness often depends.

The aged prelate listened, folding and unfolding according to his habit a silk handkerchief, and finally said:

"Reckoning with stupidity and malice may only mean guarding against them, not making any concessions to them."

After which he began to look at Pani Krzycki with a penetrating gaze and asked:

"Permit me to put one question to you: Why should your son necessarily be happy?"

She looked at him with surprise.

"Why, I am his mother."

"Yes, but there are things more important than happiness, particularly temporal,—is it not true?"

"True," she answered quietly.

"That which you said in respect to temporal matters may be more or less just and may actually be the reasons which make such marriages less happy than others, but it is necessary above all things to propound to one's self the question, What in life is greater and what is less, what is more important and what is less important, and to act according to the dictates of conscience."

"Well, how am I to act?" asked Pani Krzycki.

The aged prelate looked at the crucifix hanging on the wall and quietly, but with emphasis, answered:

"As a Christian."

A momentary silence followed.

"I am satisfied with the advice," said Pani Krzycki, "and I thank you."

VI

LADISLAUS, while his mother was in church and consulting the prelate, repaired, notwithstanding the early hour, to Pani Otocka. At the very beginning he raised to his lips both of her hands and kissed them so long that she, from that act alone, perceived his intentions.

"I knew it would be so! I knew it!" she cried with emotion and joy.

While he replied in a soft quivering voice:

"I did not require a week to perceive that I cannot live without her."

"I knew it," Zosia once more repeated. "Have you spoken with your mother, yet?"

"No. Yesterday, I ran about the city senselessly, after which I rushed to Gronski's and went to the hotel very late, and this morning I was informed that Mother was in church."

Pani Otocka again became anxious.

"Yesterday," she said, "she was very angry and God grant that she may be reconciled, for on this all depends."

"Not all," answered Ladislaus; "not to speak of my great attachment for Mother, I esteem her immensely; and God sees that I would be pleased always to conform to her will. But that has its limits; when the happiness, not only of myself, but of the being most precious to me in the world, is concerned, then I cannot sacrifice that under any circumstances; I have pondered over this all night. I have a hope that Mother will consent; as I trust in her character and in that love which she has always shown to me. If, how-

ever, contrary to my hopes, it should appear otherwise, then I will tell her that this is a resolution which cannot now be and will not be revoked."

"Maybe there is no necessity for that," said Pani Otocka, "for Aninka also is concerned. Yesterday, after the letter which she wrote to you and after Pan Gronski's departure, we talked until late at night. She was very nervous and cried, but spoke thus: 'If he returns to me, not joyfully and with entire good-will, but only because he did not want to withdraw his word, then I will never consent to it. There is no pride in me. I did not even reckon with my own self-love, and wrote to him sincerely what was in my heart, but even if it should break I would not wed him, if it shall seem to him that he is lowering himself for me.'"

"The dear, lovely creature!" interrupted Ladislaus.

Pani Otocka continued:

"After that she began to cry, and added that she would not consent to be the cause of an estrangement between mother and son."

"No, I repeat once more that my resolution cannot and shall not be revoked. Here my whole life is involved — and even if now Mother cannot find in her heart sufficient good-will, she will find it later. In the meantime I will do everything in order that my future wife should have in her also a mother, affectionate and grateful for her son's happiness."

"Can I repeat that to Miss Anney?"

"That is just what I came for. But I have yet one more prayer. She took my word that for a week I would not return to her and she alone can release me from it. But in view of what I came here for, this would be downright, needless torture. Neither a week nor a year can change anything. Nothing, absolutely! Will Cousin deign to tell her that and beg of her from me, but beg very cordially, that she release me from my word?"

"With the greatest pleasure, and I have a hope this will not be a too difficult matter to adjust."

"I thank you with my whole soul and now I will hurry to Mother."

But before he left the room, Marynia rushed in and began to gaze sharply, now at her sister, then at Ladislaus. In reality she was not apprized of the secrets of the former relations between Ladislaus and Hanka, but she already knew that Miss Anney is the former Hanka; she knew everything which transpired afterwards and, loving Miss Anney very much, she was dying from uneasiness and curiosity as to what turn the affair would take. She was so pretty with that wistful gaze and uneasy face and, besides, she had such an amusing mien that Ladislaus, in spite of his emotions, at the sight of her, fell into a good humor. Zosia remained silent, not knowing whether he wished to speak of his affair of the heart before Marynia, while he, purposely, for sometime did not break the silence; finally he approached his little cousin and squeezing her hand, announced in a sepulchral voice:

"Too late!"

"How too late," she asked alarmed.

"She is going to marry some one else."

"Who?"

"Panna — Kajetana."

And he burst out into a sincere, jolly laugh. Marynia conjectured that matters could not stand so badly since Ladislaus was jesting. Desiring, however, to learn fully the good news, she began to stamp with her foot and importune like a child.

"But how? — now, honestly. I could not sleep to-day! How? now, honestly. How?"

"Honestly, that hope and joy and happiness — there!" answered Ladislaus, pointing in the direction of Miss Anney's quarters.

After which, kissing his cousins' hands, he rushed out like a stone whirled from a sling, for he was in a great hurry.

On the way he grew grave and even gloomy at the thought that the moment for his decisive interview with his mother was approaching.

He found her in the hotel, where she awaited him in her own room. The sight of his mother's face, serene and filled with an unusual kind of sweetness, gave him, for the time being, encouragement, but at the same time he thought that gentle persuasion, entreaties, and perhaps tears, would be heavier to bear than anger — and he asked in an uncertain voice:

"Did Mamma read her letter?"

"I did," she answered, "but even before that I learned almost everything from Zosia, whom Miss Anney herself begged not to conceal anything from me."

"Gronski told me that Mamma became angry at Zosia?"

"Yes, that is so, but that can be rectified. Now I want above all things to talk with you sincerely."

So Ladislaus began to narrate how in the first moments he was struck as if by a thunderbolt and how he could not reconcile himself to the thought that Hanka and Miss Anney were one and the same person. He confessed his vacillation, his doubts, suspicions, and the pain, which pierced him; and the internal strife and accounting with his conscience and everything through which he passed. But only after reading her letter, did he perceive that this pain had its origin in his love for her and that the struggle was a struggle with his own heart and happiness; then he ceased to waver; he could not imagine happiness otherwise than with that most precious being in the world, and without her he did not desire it.

After which he said that when he became acquainted with her at Jastrzeb, as Miss Anney, from almost the first

moment he was attracted to her by some incomprehensible force and she engrossed all his thoughts. He, of course, esteemed Zosia Otocka highly, and Marynia he regarded as a bright phenomenon. But admiration and love are two different things. Besides, he did not owe anything either to Zosia or to Marynia. They were kind while he was wounded and that was all. But to Miss Anney he probably owed his life, and he remembered that she for his sake placed herself in peril. With what could he repay her for that, and how could he make reparation for the former wrong, committed while she was still almost a child? Who was the worthier of the two? Was it he, who forgot and lived from day to day an easy, thoughtless, and spiritually slothful life, or she whom no new attachments could reconcile to their separation and who ennobled her mind and heart through suffering, yearning, and labor? "I scarcely dare to believe, Mother," said he, "that she not only absolves my injury, but has not ceased to love me. Perhaps it happened thus, because it was I who, for the first time in her life opened for her the doors to the world of happiness, but undoubtedly it was because hers is a totally exceptional nature. Yes, Mother! She is one of those who, in a pristine state even at the time when they are unable to realize things, possess that noble instinct, that sort of elevation of feeling that love ennobles indeed everything, but only when it is great, when it is for a whole lifetime; and those who love have such strength, such a depth of affection, that they are incapable of any other affection. But when such a one is found, then we can only thank God on our knees, and, in plain terms, my head is confused at the thought that for my transgression I meet with, not punishment, but fabulously good fortune. It may be that there are in the world more such women who can make a man happy, but I want to be happy only with this one; maybe there are others who ennoble and elevate

everything about them, but I feel that through this one I will be better and better. Finally, this is a question not only of my happiness but also of my honor."

Here, folding his hands, he began to gaze into her eyes with a pleading look; after which he continued:

"All this I intrust to Mamma's hands; my whole life, my entire future, and the peace of my conscience, and happiness and honor."

Pani Krzycki placed both of his palms to her temples and kissed his forehead.

"My Laudie," she said, "I am an old woman and have various prejudices: so I will not tell you that from the first moments it was easy for me to assent to your intentions. Do you know that yesterday I became enraged at Zosia and until this morning, I persisted in my determination to oppose as far as it lay in my power your marriage. Be not surprised at this, since you admit that you were struck as if by lightning; then think, how it must have affected me. I, as is usual with a mother, had at the bottom of my soul the conviction that for you even a king's daughter would not be too high a mate. But it was not only the old mode of thought, not only a maternal vanity, and not only prejudices which inflamed my opposition. I feared also for your happiness. I would not have had anything against the person of Miss Anney herself, were it not for these other circumstances. I became acquainted with her at Jastrzeb and loved her sincerely; often I said, God grant that all our ladies could be like her. But learning who she is and what took place between you, I became alarmed at first at the thought that you might have committed similar offences in Jastrzeb."

"No, Mamma," answered Krzycki; "I give my word for that."

"For you see I thought you were absolutely pure; so think what a blow it was to me."

Ladislaus bowed to her hands, in order to hide his face, for notwithstanding the gravity of the moment, notwithstanding his sincere emotion and anxiety, the naïvete of his mother seemed to him something so unheard-of that he feared he might betray himself by an expression of astonishment, or what was worse, a smile. "Ah," he thought, "it is lucky that I have to swear only as to Jastrzeb, for I could not tell mother what I told Gronski, that a wise wolf never takes from that village where he keeps his lair." But simultaneously it occurred to him that one must be an angel to have such a delusion, and his adoration of his mother increased yet more.

And she continued:

"Then I took into consideration the world and the people among whom you must live. I knew that not a few would commend your conduct, but in reality you would have to endure a thousand petty annoyances and stings which would irritate and exasperate you until they caused a pain and bitterness even in your feeling towards your wife. I was concerned about your happiness which, in my blindness I craved above all things for you. And only to-day was the film taken off my eyes. Apparently such things we know and proclaim, but, nevertheless, with real surprise and as if it was something new, I heard that happiness is not the most important thing in life and that it ought not to be the greatest concern of a mother. And before that my heart was cleansed of its pride and I was commanded to be guided by my conscience: therefore, my Laudie, I cannot dissuade you from this marriage."

Ladislaus, hearing this, again bowed his head to his mother's hands and began to cover them with kisses.

"Ah, Mamma, dear," he repeated, "ah, Mamma, how happy I am!"

"And I," she answered; "for I feared that your feeling might be superficial, founded upon a delusion and fancy;

but, after this conversation, I see that you love Aninka truly."

"Yes! That is imbedded so deeply that it could only be torn from me with my life."

"I believe, I believe."

Thus mutually assuring each other, they both spoke with absolute sincerity, and both at the same time deluded themselves. For Ladislaus had an inflammable head, greedy senses, and soft heart, but he lived principally on the exterior, and none of his feelings could spring from great depths as, on the whole, he was not a deep man.

But his mother, believing every one of his words as she believed in the gospel, said with great confidence:

"May God bless you, my child. Let us at present speak of what is to come. I, of course, understand that once having agreed, it is necessary to agree not with half but with the whole heart: it is necessary to receive Aninka with open arms and give her to understand that it is she who is conferring a favor upon us for which we should be grateful."

"Yes, for she does," exclaimed Ladislaus with ardor.

"Very well, very well," answered Pani Krzycki, with a smile, "now it becomes me to go to her and thank her myself. I assume also that Aninka will withdraw the condition that you should not call upon her for a week."

"Zosia is to attend to that, but naturally Mamma's words will be more effective."

"When do you want me to go?"

Ladislaus again folded his palms:

"At once, Mother dear, at once."

"Very well; will you wait for me here, or at Zosia's?"

"Here; for Zosia might be with Marynia at the rehearsal. She sometimes accompanies her."

Pani Krzycki rose heavily from the chair, as that day, from the morning, had been trying for her and the rheuma-

tism held her more and more strongly. Having, however, straightened out her limbs, she moved briskly ahead. The thought that she was troubling herself for her boy made it an agreeable task and exertion.

But on the way she began to think of matters of which thus far there had been no mention between herself and her son. She belonged to that type of women, often found among the country nobility, who know perfectly well how to line the ideal cloak with a real lining. In her time the entire management of the Jastrzeb estate rested on her head, and on that account she had a multitude of worries and had habituated herself to struggle continually with them. So at the present time her mind turned to the material side of the affair.

"I would consent to this marriage" (she thought as if to justify herself to herself), "even though Aninka did not have anything, but I am curious to know how much she can have." After which she began to fondle the hope that while Aninka might not have millions and for an Englishwoman might not be very rich, she might have what in Poland might be regarded as great opulence, though in England it might be deemed a modest fortune.

And amidst such meditations she rang Miss Anney's door-bell.

The visit passed off as could be expected. Pani Krzycki was honest, grateful, motherly and, at the moment when she surrendered the life and happiness of her son to the hands of Miss Anney, "her dear daughter," she was, in a measure, pathetic. Miss Anney, too was in a measure, pathetic, also cordial and simple, quiet and collected as well, but she seemed to be acting with caution, though nothing whatever was said of the past. With Pani Krzycki there even remained an impression that there was by a hairbreadth too much of this "reserve." She understood perfectly that it would be want of tact on Miss Anney's part

if she displayed too much enthusiasm and conceded that she acted properly, but nevertheless she carried away at the bottom of her heart a little disappointment as it were, for there was hidden in her the conviction that the woman who would get "Laudie" and would bear his name, could be excused even though she went insane from joy.

Returning to the hotel, she did not, however, confess to her son this thought, but began to load "Aninka" with praises and speak of her so warmly that tears stood in the eyes of both. Ladislaus, above all else, was anxious to know whether the "taboo" was removed and the prohibition recalled; having learned that such was the case, a quarter of an hour later, he was at Hanka's feet.

"My beloved, my angel, my wife!" he said, embracing her knees.

VII

A FEW days later, the old notary, Dzwonkowski, and Dr. Szremski came to visit Gronski. The latter, to whom this was an agreeable surprise, as he liked both, and, besides, esteemed the doctor highly, greeted them with great cordiality and began to ask the news of the city, the vicinity, and of themselves.

"Ha! We live, we live," answered the boisterous doctor. "In these times, that is an art. But the police so far have not arrested us, the bandits have not shot us, the socialists have not blown us up into the air; so we not only live, but have come to Warsaw. I, because I must ride farther, — as far as Volhynia, and this gentleman," pointing to the notary, "on account of the concert and Panna Marynia's participation in it. Having read of it in the daily newspapers he fell into such a state that at any moment I looked for an attack of apoplexy or aneurism. There was no help for it. I had to prescribe a stay in Warsaw as a cure. Finally, he cannot at all endure our little town any more, and is thinking only of giving up his office to some one and of moving here permanently. In his heart a fire is burning, and the snow melts, and ice melts and so forth. Ha!"

During these words, the old notary moved his jaws so furiously that his chin almost touched his nose; finally he declared:

"The head splits! The head splits!"

"The same old quarrel?" asked Gronski, laughing.

"Quarrel?" repeated the notary. "It is not I who

quarrel. He has shaken up my brain, shattered my nerves, stupefied me, torn to pieces, exhausted, cleaned out, sucked, and outtalked the remnants of strength within me. From yesterday, sir, on the whole road — a continual din and roar in the ears — and after that in the hotel; to-day, since morning, and now here. No, I cannot stand it, no, I cannot!"

"Tut, tut. And who daily summons me? Who every day hangs out his tongue until it reaches the first button on his vest and orders me to examine it? Wait, sir. I will ride away and you will have to examine it yourself before a mirror."

"Then you are really going to Volhynia? How about your patients?" asked Gronski.

"I fear that in the meantime they may get well; but it can't be helped, I must go!"

"And for how long?"

"I do not know, but do not think very long. I am a Volhynian Mazur, from the minor nobility of that place, or as they say there of the single-manor nobles. They are mostly settled there as tenants of various petty nobles, but I have my own seat in partnership with a brother, an ex-judge, who has charge of the estate and to whom I am now riding."

"But, of course, not because he is sick?"

"Certainly, sir; he has become insane."

"My God! Since when?"

"Not long ago. From the time he became a 'local rights' man.'"

"Ah."

"That is so. The indigent, haughty noble took a notion to pose as a landed proprietor, hankered after the society of gentlemen, and got water on the brain. A month ago I sent him two thousand primers for our impoverished shabby gentility, of whom no one thinks and who involun-

tarily or rather in spite of their will, are there losing their Polish spirit. And would you believe it, sir, that he sent back to me the whole package, together with a letter in which he announced that he would not distribute the primers."

"Why?" asked Gronski, whom the narrative of the doctor began to interest.

"He wrote to me in the first place that they have decided to live and labor only for their own province and occupy themselves only with local or provincial affairs, and again they aim at some kind of synthesis of all nationalities, and thirdly they will Polonize nobody."

"But you were only concerned about primers for the children of the petty nobility, who are Polish."

"By them this is already styled Polonization, for it interferes with their 'synthesis.' We know in what that synthesis must end. May the devils take them, together with their diplomacy. But that is not enough! In the end, my ingenious brother informs me that he does not regard himself as a Pole, but only as a Volhynian with Polish culture and that this is his political position. Ah, sir, Stanczyk was wrong when he said that in Poland there are the most doctors. In Poland there are the most politicians. Every average Pole is a second Talleyrand, a second Metternich, a second Bismarck. He never participated in political life, is unacquainted with history, never passed through any schools, and never studied. That is nothing! He is by grace of God! He from nature has a pastille in his brain, of which he thinks that if he only lights it, then all the horse-flies and gnats, which suck our blood will be so hoaxed that they will cease to molest us. And every one is convinced that he alone sees clearly, that he alone has the exclusive measures, and that his diplomacy, county, local, provincial, or whatever you may call it, is a panacea. It never occurs to him, that with such county or

local polities, this fatherland, as Yan Casimir said, would go into direptium gentium."

"Sir," said the aged notary to Gronski, pointing to the doctor, "you have pressed in him such a button, that now he will not stop talking until we shall not be able to move hand or limb."

"That is not a button, that is a sore," answered Gronski.

And evidently it was a sore for the doctor, as he was so absorbed that he did not hear what was said about him, and began the following dialogue with his absent brother.

"Ah! So you are not a Pole but only a Volhynian with Polish culture? Very well! Then, in the first place I will tell you that you have repudiated your father, grandfather, and great-grandfather; that you have spat upon their graves; that you have renounced your traditions, your right of existence, that you have grown smaller, that you have deserted your own people and have gone to those who do not want you, who do not invite you and who treat you with contempt; that you hang in the air and you will look prettily under such conditions in your Volhynia. Again, I will tell you that you are not yet a turncoat, since that which you are doing, you do through stupid politics which in consequence of your ignorance you regard as wise, but you have paved the way for future turncoats. Your grandson or great-grandson will renounce Polish culture. And finally, if you say that you are not a Pole, but only a Volhynian, why do you not go back farther, even as far as Darwin? You could with equal justice say that you are not a Pole, but an orang-outang or a pithecanthrope with Polish culture? What? Bah! But you still say that you do not want to Polonize any one? How can you Polonize? Whether with a whip, with prison, by religious compulsion, with school, or with a gag on the native tongue? Tell me! But, if not denying your nationality you would shine with the example of your public Polish virtues, if you

would give someone your Polish hunger for liberty, your Polish ability to understand the sufferings of others, your Polish love, your Polish hope, your faith in a better future, and through these reconcile him to Poland, then would you regard such a Polonization as premature, and bad politics? But in such case, I ask you, you dunce, have you anything better to offer, and why are you staying there where you settled? You don't know? And in the end you will not even know who you are. That I will tell you. You, Brother, are a weak character and above all have a weak head."

Here he turned to Gronski:

"This is what I have to say to my brother and why I am riding to him. There is to be some kind of an assembly there, so I will say this, in other words, publicly."

"If you would only go as quickly as possible," exclaimed the notary.

And the doctor began to laugh.

"But as I have yet time, I will first attend Panna Marynia's concert."

"By all means," said Gronski, "ride, sir. Poland is not only being cut from the outside by inimical scissors, but she is beginning to be rent asunder internally. Ride, sir, and tell them that publicly. Perhaps some may be found who will be frightened at their amenableness to the future."

"I think that such will be found. For, in the main, I assume that they, or at least a majority of them, thus far feel in the old way, and only speak as they do in order to loosen, even though for a moment, the noose which presses on their throats. But in this they are mistaken. The result will be that they will be despised and trampled upon, both from above and below."

"When are you going?"

"The assembly meets in about ten days, so I actually

will stay here about a week, for I have various matters to attend to in Warsaw. In the meantime, I will visit my acquaintances, and among others Pani Otocka, and the Krzyckis. How is Krzycki?"

"As well as a fish — and he is going to marry."

"Well, well. I will wager that it is with that beautiful Englishwoman? A pure flower!"

"Yes. But it seems that this is not an English flower, only genuinely Polish, from a village meadow."

"For the Lord's sake. What are you saying?"

"That is no longer any secret. Her name is Hanka Skibianka."

Here Gronski related the whole history of Miss Anney, omitting only that Ladislaus knew her while she was Hanka.

And they listened with astonishment, while the doctor slapped his knees with his palms and cried:

"Ah! If I had known that; ah, if I had known that!"

"Well, what would have happened? asked the notary testily.

"What would have happened? I would have been in love with her not only under the ears but above. As it was, I only missed by a hair being in love with her. Ah, lucky but undeserving Krzycki! But such is my ill-luck. Let only one catch my fancy — lackaday! either some one takes her, or she is in love with somebody else. But it cannot be helped! I must see Miss Anney and tender her my best wishes. For after all Krzycki is a good boy. Such as he will not rebuild Poland, but a good boy, nevertheless. And such a comely rascal, that he ravishes the eye. I would like to see them together. That will be a couple — what!"

"If you wish to see them, and have the time," said Gronski, "then it will not be difficult, for we arranged yesterday

at Pani Otocka's that to-day we will all be present at the rehearsal for the concert. I can take you gentlemen to-day to the rehearsal, and afterwards, the whole party can go to breakfast."

"Exactly," exclaimed the notary, "that is just what I came to ask you to do. I have dropped out of the old relations and I did not know to whom to apply — well!"

Gronski glanced at his watch.

"If that is the case, all right; but we have still time. In the hall at this moment there is some kind of meeting or lecture, and such meetings usually drag beyond the designated time. After that, before they ventilate the hall and replace the chairs, a half hour will elapse. I have not omitted any rehearsal, so I know how things go."

"And I will not omit any," said the notary.

Nevertheless, he grew so impatient that they left too early. Before the building stood about a dozen persons, evidently waiting for those in the hall; while from within there reached them a buzzing noise, at times shouts, applause, and the sound of the stamping of feet.

"What kind of meeting is it?" asked the doctor.

"Really, I do not know," answered Gronski. "Now we are full of that. There are political meetings, social conferences, literary lectures, and God knows what else."

"I envy Warsaw," exclaimed the doctor.

"There is not much to envy. At times it chances that something deserves attention, but oftener such absurdities take place that one feels ashamed."

"Oh, they are already leaving," observed the notary; "but why are they shouting so?"

"Let us wait; that is some kind of a brawl," said Gronski.

In fact it evidently was a brawl, for from the roomy vestibule there rushed out on the wide stairs between ten, and twenty men, without caps or hats, who in the twinkling of an eye, formed a disorderly heap. In this heap, hands,

canes, and umbrellas moved violently, and these motions were accompanied by a shrill shriek. Afterwards from the gyrating mob, shoved by tens of arms, shot out, as if from a sling, somebody, with bare head and tattered coat, who, leaping from the stairs, turned a somersault at the doctor's feet in such a manner as almost to tumble him and the notary on the ground.

"Swidwicki!" exclaimed Gronski with astonishment.

Swidwicki rose, and shaking his fist menacingly at the crowd, which, having ejected him outdoors, was again returning to the hall, began to say with a panting voice:

"Ah, it is you! They have warmed my hide — they have warmed my hide! They have broken my ribs a little, and torn my coat. But that is nothing! I also have crooked a few straight noses and have straightened out a few crooked ones. This is the second time that this has happened to me — ouch!"

"Come with me. You cannot stay thus, with bare head and in such a coat."

"No, no!" answered Swidwicki. "Ouch! Let me recover my breath. Hey! Messenger!"

And beckoning to a messenger, he said to him:

"Citizen! Here are two pieces of coin and a wardrobe check. Go to the vestibule and fetch me my hat and top-coat."

"But for the Lord's sake what happened?"

"Directly, directly," said Swidwicki; "but let me first dress. After that we will go to some confectioner's shop — ouch! For as soon as the meeting closes, they will begin to go out and, finding me here, they will be ready to administer a new drubbing to me and to you gentlemen to boot."

"So that was a meeting?"

"A meeting, conference, discussion, lecture — whatever you wish. Panna Sicklawer spoke on 'Imparting knowl-

edge.' On the platform sat Pan Citronenduft, Panna Bywalkiewicz, Panna Anserowicz, Panna Kostropacka, the editor Czubacki, and others. The hall was packed to suffocation. Ouch! I enjoyed myself like a king."

"We see," observed Gronski.

"You think not? But introduce me to these gentlemen. For I am the hero of the day."

"Hero Swidwicki, gentlemen; Notary Dzwonkowski and Dr. Szremski," said Gronski.

Swidwicki squeezed the palms of Gronski's astonished companions; after which when the messenger brought the hat, cane, and top-coat he dressed himself and said:

"With this cane I would be ready to wait for them here — but for to-day I have had enough. The meeting will last twenty minutes or longer. Let us go to some confectioner's shop, for I feel a pain in my legs and cannot stand."

They went to a confectioner's. Swidwicki ordered for himself one and then a second glass of cognac, after which he began to talk:

"That was an instructive meeting. Panna Sicklawer, I tell you gentlemen, is a Cicero in petticoats. When she started to impart knowledge to various meek creatures of the masculine gender and various magpies of fourteen years, of whom the audience mainly consisted, even I grew warm. The meek creatures applauded or else cried 'shame' when there was a talk of parents, and the magpies blushed so violently and fidgeted in their seats so much, that they seemed to sit on needles, and everything went along smoothly. Remarks were made by Pan Citronenduft, Panna Gotower and some maid, a native of far away Kars, whose name as well as I could hear it, had a Grecian or Spanish sound, — Nieodtego. The maturer portion of the auditors was also carried away by the enthusiasm, and I, though Gronski doubts it, enjoyed myself like a king.

For you see, gentlemen, that I, from principle, have nothing against imparting knowledge, — nothing. Quite the reverse! Only, I am of the opinion, if an affair is to be jolly let it be really jolly. So then, after a few addresses, I rose, asked leave to speak and announced that I desired to recite a poem in honor of the gathering. They agreed to it and I received applause in advance. Then I began to declaim — indeed, not an original poem, but my own parody on the fable: 'Once wanton little Thad.' But this did not continue long; it appeared that my Thaddy proved himself to be so wanton, that he was too wanton, even for them. They did not like also this; that in staring at Panna Nieodtego, I closed one eye. They began to shout 'Silence!' 'Fie!' 'Away with him! This is jeering!' And here my ideal fable began to change into a real epic. For when in reply to the shout 'This is jeering,' I said, 'Well what did you think it was?' there was a universal roar of 'Put him out!' At least fifty hands grappled my shoulders and neck; a nice rumpus followed. They struck me, I struck back. Finally, they dumped me into the corridor: from the corridor on to the stairs, and into the street. The rest you gentlemen know. I repeat for the third time that I enjoyed myself like a king."

"That to me is at least courage," said the doctor; "it is necessary to stop such things, even by a scandal; so you did well, sir; you are a brave nationalist."

"I, a nationalist," exclaimed Swidwicki, "why, the day before yesterday I was thrown out of a meeting of the National Democrats. Indeed, a little more politely, but I was ejected."

Gronski began to laugh.

"So this is your new sport?"

But with this their conversation ended as their attention was attracted by the crowd returning from the lecture. Before the window flowed a black human stream, among

which were a large number of striplings, and young girls with cheeks covered with blushes.

When the stream finally passed by, there appeared after an interval the bright, vernal forms of Hanka, Marynia, and Pani Otocka, in the company of Krzycki.

VIII

UPON the so called "happiest period" in Krzycki's life certain small shadows fell, and this for various reasons. If on the one hand his love for Hanka grew with each day, on the other there began various petty annoyances which his mother had foreseen. They were things almost imperceptible, about which one could not pick a quarrel, but which nevertheless stung. Thus it happened that the ladies of Gorek came to Pani Krzycki to invite her to the wedding of Kajetana to Pan Dolhanski, which wedding through a special dispensation of the church was to take place in a few days. Pani Krzycki in tendering them her good wishes announced that they could also do the same to her, owing to the betrothal of her son to Miss Anney. Then both, one after the other, began to heartily embrace her, which, though apparently a sign of their good wishes, looked more like condolence, the more so as Pani Wlocek did not utter anything besides the words, "It is God's will," while Kajetana raised her eyes as piously as if she wanted to supplicate the Powers on high to comfort the heartbroken mother. Ladislaus laughed after their departure, but in his soul he wished that both would break their necks. When, however, a few days later it appeared that out of the entire circle of acquaintances only Hanka did not receive an invitation from these ladies, he wanted to start a brawl with Dolhanski: and his mother was barely able to restrain him with the declaration that neither she herself, nor Zosia, nor Marynia would attend the wedding. Krzycki was even angered because some of his acquaintances, in contrast to the ladies of Gorek, tendered

to him their good wishes with excessive ardor, as if he had performed an heroic act. His marriage, as well as the antecedents of Hanka, became the subject of every conversation in "society." Out in the world, great political changes could take place, bombs could explode, strikes could break out, but in the salons for a few days only Hanka was spoken of, various flabby dames, with eyes half closed, in a questioning tone, drawling through their teeth, "Anka — Skubanka [1] — n'est ce pas?" But while the good wishes of those who tendered them to Krzycki with such excessive ardor sprang from appreciation of the heroism with which he dared to take as wife "Skubanka," Hanka's marriage settlement and the hope of "plucking" the millionaire in the future played an important rôle. This marriage settlement, which, agreeably with Pani Krzycki's anticipations, was, for local conditions, quite considerable, but by no means reached the millions, grew in public opinion with almost every hour, so that it attained almost fabulous proportions, and intensified the universal curiosity to the extent that when Hanka in the company of her two young female friends together with Pani Krzycki and her fiancé appeared at the races, all the lorgnettes were directed at their carriage. The flabby dames from "high life," gazing at her radiant countenance, sparkling with happiness and health, indeed said that they could at once surmise that "this is something a little different," and contended that in the present days this "high life" ought to open its delicate bosom to a person possessing such means for "doing good." As to her comeliness, however, the opinion prevailed that she was not sufficiently pretty for one to lose his head and that Krzycki was marrying for money. His defence was undertaken only by the ladies from Gorek, who, meeting now many people, made it everywhere understood that their young neighbor did not

[1] "Skubanka," a pun upon the word, "skubac," to pluck.

always seek merely money, and that only when he was disappointed in other fancies, did he come to the conclusion that it was better to have money than nothing.

Thus did things shape themselves externally. But on the sky of the betrothed pair appeared tiny clouds which, as Ladislaus' love became inflamed, appeared even with greater frequency. Hanka, habituated to English customs, did not at all hesitate to receive her fiancé at her home and pass with him long hours alone; to stroll with him over the city, to drive from the city without a chaperon, and even call him by his Christian name. She said to herself that in great and sincere love there also should be room for friendship and that it was necessary before one became a wife to be a sincere friend and comrade. She thought that Ladislaus would understand this and not only would love her all the more but also cherish her all the more. Once she had read in an English book that one might love and not cherish, and that in such a case love grows embittered to the degree that it may become perpetual unhappiness. So, desiring to avoid this and place her future life upon immovable foundations, she wished to win, besides love, the deepest possible friendship.

But here the misunderstandings between the engaged couple began. That golden-hair, that good friend, gazing with a heavenly light, that rose-colored, gay comrade who dressed herself in a light dress and spring hat, was so charming that Ladislaus cherished indeed without limit, but at every tête-à-tête lost his head. To Hanka it appeared that her betrothed, though he was enamoured to distraction and at the same time was a friend, should be the kind of a man upon whose shoulders she could at every moment press her head with perfect confidence that he would not abuse her trust and would not take advantage of their seclusion nor of any temporary weakness, nor of the gray hour, nor of the fact that love disarms and weakens a woman. He, on

the contrary, perhaps because he lost his head, acted as if he thought that friendship and the relations of a comrade only added to the rights of betrothal. From this there was generated a mutual vigilance; in him a watchfulness for everything of which he might take advantage; in her a wariness of that which she ought to avoid. This vigilance, at first silent, soon lapsed into quarrels. They were followed by apologies, which would have intensified the love of both were it not that Ladislaus apologized too passionately. And this misunderstanding was in reality deeper than both thought, for when Hanka, remembering what once had taken place between them, believed that he should on that account be more continent, he, in moments when blinded by desire, seemed to fancy that very past, together with the burnt bridges, justified him in everything. From these causes, the enchanted edifice of their happiness from time to time became defaced and would have been defaced yet more strongly were it not for this, that in Ladislaus there was material for everything and there came upon him moments entirely different. Sometimes on clear nights when they sat on the balcony leading to the garden of Hanka's residence, and when from the neighboring balcony came the song of Marynia's violin, and the moonlight seemed to sleep quietly on the opposite walls, it also put to slumber Ladislaus' senses. His soul, lulled to sleep by the sight of the beloved being, bleaching like a white angel in the dusk, — intoxicated with the fragrance of leaves and flowers, winged by music, was dissolved into a kind of universal but sweet and chaste feeling, which enveloped Hanka and bore her towards the stars. The impressionable soul of the girl at such times was susceptible of this and was simply submerged in happiness.

But these were transitory moments of tranquillity of mind. A moment later, while Ladislaus was bidding her good-night and when he kissed her hands and forehead,

quickly there was awakened in him the eternal hungry desire, and he sought her lips and hugged her breast to his own; he lost his memory, and, when she broke away from his arms, he said that he did not promise her that he would be an English Quaker; and they parted, if not angry, as if both were humiliated and sad.

And that sadness fraternized with love.

But it often happened that Ladislaus disarmed Hanka with his great frankness which in reality was his chief attribute.

"You, my Hanusia," he said to her once, after serious quarrel, "would want that I should mount a ladder and stay on the highest round, for a time — Good! — I can! But to stay there forever I could not do any more than I could walk on stilts all the time. Do not imagine that I am something more than I am. I am an ordinary mortal, who only differs from others in this, that he loves you above everything."

"No, Laudie," answered Hanka, "I do not at all desire that you should be some great personage, for I remember that the Englishmen say that an honest man is the noblest work of God."

"I did a little mischief once, but I think I am honest."

"Yes, but remember that not he is honest who does not do evil, but he who does good. In that everything is contained."

"I agree to that. You will teach me that."

"And you me."

"Ha! we will keep house in Jastrzeb and will do all we can. There is much work to be done there and of the kind for which I am fitted. To be a good husbandman, to be good to the people, to instruct them; to teach, love, and enlighten; to be also a good citizen of the country and in case of necessity to die for it — for this, I give my word I am fit. Yes, it is so. And now you have me. But taking

everything together, no evil will befall you with me, Hanusia, — I love you too much for any evil to befall you. Only, my golden one, my love, my rosy lady, do not command me to sit on the ladder, for that I cannot do."

His simplicity and sincerity propitiated Hanka. The thought of a joint life in Jastrzeb, of loving the folks whose child she was, of instructing them, of laboring over and for them, cheered and allured her more powerfully than anything else could do. To return to Poland and take charge of a Polish village was the plan which she formulated immediately after the death of the Anney family. And now just such a horizon was opened to her by this former "young lord" whom she loved while yet a simple girl. Therefore she was grateful to him: she was ready in her soul to exalt his good qualities, to exculpate his faults, to love him, and to persevere faithfully at his side, but in exchange she wanted nothing more than that he should love her not only with his senses, but with a true and chaste love, and that he should regard her above all things as his life companion, "for better or for worse."

And, for that reason, whenever there came to her moments in which it seemed to her that he saw in her principally an object for his desires and was unable to find in himself strength to struggle with them and elevate his feelings to noble heights, doubt seized her heart and she could not resist the thought that he was not such as she would wish him to be.

"But nevertheless," she consoled herself in her soul, "that is a sincere and true nature, and where there is sincerity and truth, everything may be brought to light."

Ladislaus on the contrary was in reality sincere to the degree that one could see through him — through and through, as though he were made of glass. The proof of this was the opinion which Dr. Szremski expressed about him in a conversation with Gronski.

"To me," he said, "the present-day Hanka Skibianka is ten times more interesting than the former Miss Anney, and I wish her happiness from my whole soul. But if she bases that happiness upon the feeling which Krzycki entertains for her, I fear that she will be disappointed. I do not wish to say anything bad of him. On the contrary, to me he is a sympathetic type, for he is immensely ours, immensely domestic. If he had lived a hundred years ago and been a Uhlan, he would have charged at Samo-Sierra no worse than Kozietulski and Niegolewski. Only he belongs to that species of men for whom it is easier to die for some idea or for some feeling than to live for them and to persevere in them. To turn to one idea or to one feeling, as a magnetic needle turns to the north, is not within their power nor their concern. They require distraction, amusement. And there is nothing strange in this. Consider only that for entire ages nobody was better off than the various Krzyckis and Gronskis — nobody. So they sucked of the pleasures of life, like juice of grapes. They ate, drank, played, dissipated — bah! they even fought for the pleasure of it. They were not vicious nor terrible, for a happy man cannot be totally vicious. They had in their hearts a certain feeling of humanity. They were indulgent to people who were subject to them, but above all things they were indulgent to themselves. Hence at the bottom of the Polish soul always lies indulgence. Then came the time of penance and that indulgence by right of inheritance, particularly in the spheres to which Krzycki belongs, remains. For him, neither love for woman nor for fatherland will suffice. He will love them and, in a given case, will perish for them, but in life he will indulge himself. And you see, sir, that it was just for this reason that I said that such as he will not rebuild Society."

"And who will?" asked Gronski.

"The future generations — not the pot-bellied, not the

easy-natured, not the chatterboxes, not the indulgers in sensual delights and the pleasures of life — no — apparently they are good for everything and fit for nothing — but only the hardy, the persistent, the quiet, and the practical. For them, misfortune and slavery have tilled the ground for a hundred years."

"And the present day manures the ground," said Gronski, "only it is a pity that this manure has such a rank smell."

"That is not manure; that is sand blown from abroad which renders the soil sterile," replied the doctor with energy.

And he began to curse.

IX

DOLHANSKI, however, completely subdued his fiancée and his future mother-in-law, inasmuch as he prevailed upon them to call personally upon Hanka and invite her to the wedding. They were prompted to this by the consideration that at any rate it behooved them to preserve the outward semblance of good relations with their future neighbors from Jastrzeb, and they were persuaded in particular by the news, which he brought from the high spheres, that "high life" was reconciled to the idea of admitting Hanka into its fold, while he, on the other hand, wanted to see her at a close range in the church. After their visit, during which the mother and daughter, under the watchful eye of Dolhanski, acted not only properly but quite amiably, Pani Krzycki revoked her resolution, of not attending the nuptial rites.

These took place early in the week at the Church of the Order of Visitation in the presence of a great concourse of dames from the "grand world" and Dolhanski's titled colleagues from the club. In this the desire to take a close view of the peasant-millionairess played as important a part as the wish to see Dolhanski. Those of his acquaintances who knew the ladies from Gorek had previously stated that he was taking a lady of wealth, but old and ludicrous; in consequence of which these good colleagues wanted to see what kind of mien he would have, so that they might afterwards have a subject for their gibes and jests. But in this respect they met with the most complete disappointment. Dolhanski, escorted on one side by Gronski, on the

other by Count Gil, walked through the church with such self-confidence, such sangfroid, and with such a smile on his lips, as though he had the right and desire to jeer at his colleagues. The tall and gaunt young lady did not, after all, look so badly in her lace wedding dress. She had too much powder on her face; her veil was too long, and too much did she "tremble like a leaf," which created an impression that this leaf did that a little purposely.

There was nothing in her, however, to excite ridicule, and, when the two knelt before the altar, the dames and beaux, looking from the depth of the church, had to admit that in her slender white form there was some charm. But the eyes of those present were directed principally at Hanka who glided through the nave on Ladislaus' arm, like a light spring cloud. To the gentlemen of the club it seemed that from the moment of her entrance the church grew brighter. Count Gil, who found himself near her, behind the stalls, later stated in a certain salon that a rosy warmth radiated from her. Others at once corroborated this and to the mot of a dame that in order to find favor in men's eyes it was necessary that one must not only be a woman but also a radiator, they replied that it was absolutely necessary.

In the meanwhile they envied Ladislaus Mr. Anney's millions and Hanka, who so absorbed to herself the general attention that Pani Otocka and Marynia passed by almost unobserved. Neither appeared to the best advantage that day. In Pani Otocka, Dolhanski's marriage aroused a certain disgust, which was reflected in her countenance, and Marynia opened her lips too widely out of curiosity, and besides, her bared arms were so thin and, as usual with immature girls, were so red that, they could only excite compassion. The ladies of the "grand world," besides, did not look at one or the other for the further reason that Ladislaus, with his stature and visage of a Uhlan of the

time of the Duchy of Warsaw, became the focus upon which the rays of their tortoise-shell lorgnettes were converged.

With the appearance of the priest silence fell and the rites began. The lorgnettes were now directed towards the altar. In the distance could be seen floating under the orange blossoms the bridal veil and Dolhanski's head, somewhat bald at the summit, over which crept the reflexes of the candles flickering in the dusk. Krzycki, bending towards Hanka, began to whisper: "And we will soon—" and she dropped her eyelids in sign of assent; after which when their eyes met, she blushed violently and raised her lace handkerchief to her lips, and later fixed her gaze upon the altar, for she recalled to her mind how, not long before, the candles flickered in the same manner in the Church of the Holy Cross, when together they prayed for their future happiness. Yes, soon they would kneel there again in order not to be separated for life, and this thought, so full of sweetness and at the same time of uneasiness of feeling, expanded her breast.

In the meanwhile in the silence could be heard the voice of the priest: "Edward, do you take Kajetana, whom you see before you, for wife?" and when Dolhanski firmly confirmed this and Kajetana mumbled that she wanted this Edward, their hands were bound by the stole and the rites rapidly approached an end; then the hymeneal party left the church. The bridal couple were to leave for a tour abroad within two hours, but before that in the dining-hall of the hotel a dinner awaited them, to which, of the relatives of the groom, only Pani Krzycki, Ladislaus, Hanka, as his betrothed, and the sisters were invited; of the more distant, Gronski and Count Gil, as groomsmen attended. The dinner with the inevitable toasts did not last long; after it the newly-married pair repaired to their separate apartments and after a certain time reappeared

attired in their travelling clothes. Then began the usual bustle preceding a journey; trunks, small luggage, and bright travelling paraphernalia were hauled out. Dolhanski during the dinner and these last moments displayed such sangfroid and such phlegm that all the lords of England might envy him. Without the least haste he conversed with the gentlemen; he expressed his regrets to Marynia that he could not be at the concert; to Pani Otocka he said that he owed to her in a great measure his happiness of that day; and afterwards intrusted Gorek to the neighborly care of Krzycki, and bantered with Gronski, trying to persuade him to follow in his footsteps.

This superb calmness of his contrasted strangely with the uneasiness and distraction of the bride. For a half hour before the departure and immediately after donning her travelling robe, she began to stare at her mother with an inquiring look as if awaiting from her something which was overlooked or forgotten and which under no circumstances ought to be overlooked. This continued so long that it attracted general attention, and when Pani Wlocek did not appear to understand the inquiring look, Kajetana beckoned her for a confidential talk in a room adjoining the dining-hall.

To the ears of the guests there began to reach for a quarter of an hour some alarming though muffled cries of, "Ah!" and "Oh!" and after an interval the bride entered with her eyes covered by her palms. But after a while she dropped her hands alongside her dress and gazing at Golhanski with the look of an antelope at a lion, she asked in an almost inaudible voice:

"Edward, perhaps it is already time?"

Gronski, Krzycki, and Count Gil bit their lips, while Dolhanski glanced at his watch and said:

"We have yet five minutes."

X

THE cloudlets looming between Hanka and Ladislaus began by degrees to be transformed into clouds. At times they ceased to mutually understand each other. Hanka was more and more disturbed by the thought whether Ladislaus, notwithstanding his good heart and his ability to appreciate everything which is exalted and noble, was not a weak character, that in a moment of sudden impulse or passionate ecstasy is unable to resist and cannot muster within himself sufficient strength, even though his own worth is involved, and at this thought she was oppressed by a deep sorrow. But she was yet more painfully nettled on another side of the matter. This was that she arrived at the conviction that his feelings towards her were better, purer and, as it were, more shy at the time when he thought that she was Miss Anney. She remembered various moments, both in Jastrzeb and in Warsaw, in which she was certain that this burning flame of love, which glowed in his heart, was at the same time a sacrificial flame of esteem. And now when she had told him that she is the former Hanka that pure fire has changed into an ignition of the senses. Why? Was the cause of this their former sin; was it that she was a peasant? In the answer to those questions lay the pain, for Hanka felt that whatever happened was the result of these causes.

But she was mistaken in thinking that Ladislaus did not understand that just for these two reasons he ought to act directly contrary, in order to efface in her the memory of sin and to raise her in her own eyes and to respect her as his future wife. He understood this quite clearly, and

often it happened that after parting from her he upbraided himself, not mincing words, and in his soul made a solemn promise of reformation. But as in his easy life he had not accustomed himself to contend with anything and, above all, with himself, therefore this lasted but a short time — as long only as he was away from her, as long as he was not enveloped by the warmth emanating from her; only when he was not absorbed with her eyes; did not feel her hand in his own, and did not intoxicate himself with her feminine attractions. Then reason blinded in him and darkened; he became the slave of blood, full of sophisms, the agent of senses, and the recollection of the former Hanka, instead of repressing the temptation, only increased it the more.

Under such conditions, sooner or later, the storm had to break above the heads of both and create desolation. Accordingly it burst sooner than Krzycki could have foreseen.

One day, coming at the twilight hour to Hanka, he found her in a strange and unusual condition. She was agitated, her countenance was suffused with blushes, her eyes were red, and the hand which she tendered to him, palpably trembled. At the beginning she did not want to tell him what was the matter, but when they sat beside each other, he began to beg of her that she would not make anything a secret with him, but to tell him what occurred, not only as a fiancé, but as her best friend.

Hanka was always conciliated by an appeal to friendship. Therefore after a while she said, smiling sadly:

"I was not concerned about any secret but I preferred to keep to myself an unpleasantness. Did you, sir, ever notice my servant, Pauly?"

(Hanka from a certain time addressed her fiancé as "sir," believing that in this manner she would hold him more easily at a proper distance.)

"Pauly?" repeated Ladislaus, and though, after all, he thus far had done nothing with which to reproach himself, a sudden disquiet arose in him. "Pauly? Why of course! Why, she was at Jastrzeb and I saw her here every day. What happened?"

"She created for me a horribly disagreeable scene and has left me."

"Why?"

"That is just what I do not know. She always was very violent and nervous, but very honest. So I was attached to her and I thought that she would be attached to me. But for some time I have observed in her something like a dislike to me, with each day greater. Really, I never was harsh to her; even the contrary. So I attributed everything to the nerves. In the meantime, to-day, it came to an outburst and it is so disagreeable to me! so disagreeable!"

Hanka's voice faltered, and it could be seen that she felt the whole occurrence deeply. So Ladislaus pressed her hand to his lips and asked with sympathy·

"What kind of outburst was it?"

"This afternoon, or rather after Marynia's return from the rehearsal, we were to ride up town with Zosia. So, desiring to change my dress, I ordered her to hand it to me. Pauly went after it as usual and brought it, but suddenly she threw it upon the ground and began to trample upon it, and in addition screamed in a loud, shrill voice that she would serve me no longer. At first I was stupefied, for it occurred to me that she had become insane."

"She surely is insane!" interrupted Ladislaus; "but what further?"

"She slammed the door and left. I did not see her any more. About an hour later somebody came for her things and wages."

Here Hanka began to shake her head.

"And nevertheless when I recall her dislike and what she told me in the last moments, I do not think that it was an attack of insanity; it was only an outburst of hatred, which she could no longer restrain in herself. And for me this is such a disappointment, such a disappointment!"

"My lady — Hanus," said Ladislaus, seizing both of her hands, "is it worth while to take to heart the deed of a foolish vixen? For she is a foolish vixen — nothing more. It is enough to look at her. Calm yourself, Hanus, — this is only a momentary matter which it is necessary to forget as soon as possible. Remember who you are and who she is! Such times have come that everything is turned topsy-turvy. Such occurrences now take place everywhere. But they will pass away. In the meantime we two have so many reasons for joy that in view of them such wretched smarts ought to disappear."

And he began to press alternately her hands to his lips and to his breast and gaze in her eyes, but this increased her grief; for Hanka desiring to spare unnecessary disagreeableness to her betrothed and herself did not confess everything to him. She was particularly reticent about this, that the infuriated servant, on leaving, screamed at her in her eyes, "You base peasant. You ought to serve me, not I you! Your place is with cows, not in the palace!" Perhaps Hanka might not have taken these words so much to heart were it not for the previous friction in her relations with Ladislaus, and were it not for the thought that he transgressed certain bounds perhaps because she was his former sweetheart and a peasant. But just this reason caused the thorn to be imbedded in her heart more deeply and bred in her a fear as to future life in which similar scenes might be repeated more frequently.

So, also, his words about the happiness awaiting them were only drops overflowing the cup of bitterness, and his caresses affected the aggrieved girl like a child, who the

more she is consoled the more disconsolate she becomes. There came to her a moment of weakness and exhaustion. The usual strength deserted her, her nerves were unstrung, and she began to sob, but feeling at the same time ashamed of her tears she buried her face in his breast.

"Hanus, my Hanus!" repeated Ladislaus.

And he began to kiss her light hair. Afterwards clasping her temples with his palms, he raised her tear-stained face and kissed off her tears. She did not defend herself; so after a while he sought with his mouth her quivering lips.

"Hanus! Hanus!" he whispered in a panting voice.

The ferment of desire more and more obscured his reason, obscured his heart, his memory. He drank from the girl's lips while his breath held out, he forgot himself like a drunkard and finally seized her in his arms.

"Hanus! Hanus!"

And it happened that he offended her grievously, that to the humiliation, which she had met that day, he added a new humiliation; to insult, a new insult — that an abyss plainly separated them!

XI

WHEN on the morning of the following day Ladislaus awoke after a brief feverish sleep, he was seized by grief and an insane rage at himself. He recalled everything which had taken place. He remembered that his parting with Hanka the day before was equivalent to being shown the door; there returned to him as a wicked echo his own wretched and dreadful words said in his passion at the time of separation, that if her resistance flowed from fear that later he might break their engagement, then let her know that it was an idle fear. And so he imputed this resistance to miserable motives. And he, a man who prided himself not only upon his good breeding but also upon a subtile sense of honor and personal worthiness — he, Krzycki, could act the way he did and say what he said. In the first moments after opening his eyes, it seemed to him that this was a point-blank impossibility; some kind of a continuation of the nightmare which throttled his slumber, which ought to disappear with the light of day.

But that nightmare was a heavy reality. It was incumbent upon him to take it into account and remedy it in some manner. He sat down to write a letter, in which he smote himself upon the breast, complained, and apologized. He said that no one was able to condemn him as he had condemned himself, and if he dared to beg for forgiveness it was only in hope that perhaps some voice, some echo of the better moments would intercede for him in her heart and would procure for him forgiveness. At the close he begged for an opportunity of repeating in person the words of the letter and for an answer, even in case the sentence pronounced against him was final.

But when the messenger who took the letter informed him upon his return that there was no answer, he fell into genuine despair. As a really spoiled child of life, unaccustomed to opposition and obstacles, and one convinced that everything was due him, it began to appear to him that this was more than he deserved; that he was the injured party. He would not admit, however, that all was lost. He indulged in the hope that Hanka might, before opening the letter, have announced that there was no answer and that after reading it she would be moved, would relent, and rescind her resolution. Sustained by this hope, he dressed himself, strolled over the city for an hour in order to give Hanka time to reckon with her heart, and afterwards rang the bell of her residence.

But he was not received. Then it occurred to him to apply to Pani Otocka. After a while, he nevertheless perceived that the causes of his rupture with Hanka were of such a nature that it was impossible to discuss them either with Pani Otocka or his mother. In his soul he now began to accuse Hanka of downright cruelty, but at the same time the greater the difficulties interposed between them the greater was his grief. He could not, in any measure, be reconciled to the thought that whatever he regarded as his own should be taken away from him; and as is usual with weak persons, he began to commiserate himself.

From Pani Otocka he went to Gronski, regarding him as the only person with whom he could speak frankly and whose mediation would be effective. And here disappointment awaited him. Gronski had suffered for several days with his eyes and was not allowed to read; this put him into a bad humor, and for this reason he received Ladislaus more indifferently than usual. Ladislaus became convinced that it was difficult to speak of the rupture not only with Pani Otocka and his mother, but

even with a man and old friend who knew of his former relations with Hanka. A feeling of shame plainly choked the words in his throat, and he began to beat about the bush and palliate things, talk in empty phrases about a misunderstanding and the necessity of a friendly mediation, so that Gronski at last asked, with a shade of impatience:

"Tell me plainly about what you had a falling out, and then I can tell whether I will undertake to bring you together again."

And evidently he did not attach much importance to the matter for he waved his hand and said:

"It would be best if you made it up between yourselves."

"No," replied Ladislaus; "this is more serious than you think, and we ourselves cannot come to any agreement."

"Well, finally, what was it about?"

Shame, exertion, and constraint were depicted upon Ladislaus' face.

"In a moment of forgetfulness and ecstasy," he said, "I passed — that is — I wanted to pass — certain limits —"

And he stopped abruptly.

Gronski began to look at him with amazed eyes and asked:

"And she?"

"Why, if anything had happened there would not have been any rupture and I surely would not speak of it now. She ordered me to the door and not to show myself there any more."

"May God bless her," exclaimed Gronski.

Silence ensued. Gronski walked with big paces over the room repeating every little while, "It is unbelievable!" and again, "An unheard-of thing!" and in addition his face became more and more severe and cold.

After which he sat down and, looking at Ladislaus, began to speak deliberately:

"I have known many people even among our aristoc-

racy, in whom beneath the veneer of society, beneath high descent and all the pretensions of elegant breeding were concealed the ordinary coarse, low, peasant instincts. If this observation can be applied to you as a comfort, accept it, for I have no other for you."

A sudden wave of anger swept over Ladislaus' heart and brain. For a while he struggled with himself in order not to explode and answer insult with insult; in the end he subdued himself and replied in a hollow voice:

"I deserve it."

But Gronski, not disarmed by this confession, continued:

"No, my dear sir, I will not undertake your defence, for I should act contrary to my convictions. To you less than to any one else was it allowable to indulge yourself, even out of regard for the past. And your fiancée must have so understood it, and besides she did not forget her extraction. To you it was less permissible! She was a hundred times right in showing you the door. The matter is really more serious than I thought, and so serious that I do not see any help for it. You did not respect Hanka, your future wife, and therefore yourself and your own honor. In view of this how can she honor you and what can she think of you?"

"I know," said Ladislaus in the same hollow voice, "and I have said all this to myself in almost the same words. I wrote a letter to her this morning, begging for forgiveness — there was no answer. I went to her personally — I was not received. So I came to you as the last refuge — for — for me there pleads only one thing — I acted badly, brutally, and scurvily, but I have not ceased to love her. There is no life for me without her, and though you may not believe it, nevertheless it is so that under the frenzy which possessed me, under that froth which blinded me and under which I to-day sink, lies the feeling not only deep but pure — "

Gronski again began to measure with great steps the room for he was somewhat touched by Ladislaus' words.

While the latter continued:

"If she will not read my letters and will not receive me, then I will not be able to tell her that. Hence it is imperative that some one should speak to her in my name. I cannot apply either to Mother or Pani Zosia in this. I thought that you, sir — but since you decline, I now have no one."

"Look, however, into the eyes of reality," said Gronski more gently, "for it may be that her love for you was at once torn into shreds. In such case from where will she take it when she no longer possesses it?"

"Let her tell me so; that at least is yet due to me."

Again silence fell.

"Listen," Gronski finally said, "I always was a friend of yours and of your mother, but this mission which you want to intrust to me I cannot undertake. I cannot among other reasons, because if your fiancée does not reply to you, so likewise she may not reply to me. One look, one word, will close my mouth and with this it would end. But try another method. Panna Hanka comes quite often with Marynia to the rehearsals, at which I am always present, and afterwards I escort both home. Come with me. You may find an opportunity to speak with her. During the return home I will take Marynia and you will remain with her. I think that she will not repel you even though out of regard for Marynia, to whom she would not wish to divulge what had passed between you. — Then tell her what you have said to me and also beg her for an interview, which, if it cannot be otherwise — will be final. It will be necessary somehow to give to the world some plausible excuse for your rupture; so I presume she will agree to that. If not, we will think of something else."

Ladislaus began to wring his hands and said:

"Perhaps through Zosia we could ascertain whether this is forever."

"You understand that she may not have wished to discuss the cause of your rupture even with Pani Zosia."

"I understand, I understand."

"But you now have a fever," said Gronski, "your hands are burning. Go, try to cool off and calm yourself."

XII

Laskowicz now beheld Marynia, indeed from a distance, but daily. Even on rainy days, when she did not walk to the rehearsals, but rode, he lay in wait on the stairway of the edifice, in order to see her alight from the carriage. On fair days he usually waited near her home, and afterwards followed after her to the hall. As among the employees in the building were found a few "associates," these facilitated his admittance to the rehearsals. To hide in the boxes or in the seats at the end of the rows was easy, as during the rehearsals only the stage was fully lit up and in the auditorium itself the dusk was illumined by only a few lamps, which were lit in order that the handful of privileged lovers of music, who occupied the seats behind the orchestra, might not be plunged in complete darkness. Amidst these privileged ones, Laskowicz often recognized acquaintances, — Gronski, Pani Otocka, the old notary, Miss Anney, sometimes Krzycki, and two or three times, Dr. Szremski. But notwithstanding his hatred of Ladislaus and dislike of the doctor and Gronski, he was little occupied by them and thought of them very little, as his eyes could not even for a moment be torn from Marynia. He encompassed with his gaze her girlish form, standing out on the edge of the stage, bathed in a lustre of electricity, luminous of her own accord, and involuntarily she reminded him of that alabaster statuette, which the venerable canon deemed his greatest treasure. Laskowicz was not an educated man. His one-sided study of physics had contracted his intellectual horizon and he was incapable of rendering to himself a clear account of certain

impressions. Nevertheless, when he gazed on that maid, with violin in hand, on her pure calm countenance, on the elongated outlines of her figure and dress, there awakened in him a half conscious feeling that in her there was something of poetry, and something of the church. She seemed to him an artless supernal vision, to which one might pray.

Accordingly he deified her in his wild, fanatical soul. But there raged within him a revolt against all divinities, therefore he fought with his own feelings and struggled to depress and weed them out to the last extremity. Intentionally he plucked off the wings of his own thoughts: intentionally he imposed fetters upon his vagaries and unchained his concupiscence. He discomfited himself, tortured himself, and suffered.

Often he stood on the brink of madness — and in such cases he was ready to annihilate, slaughter, and set fire to the whole city in order to seize, amidst the bloodshed and conflagration, this silvery maid and possess her, — and afterward perish with her and all others. He imagined that during the revolutionary storm, which the waves of the proletariat would stir up, such an universal hour of annihilation might strike. But when reality scattered these dreams, when moments occurred in which it became plain that the people themselves put a muzzle upon the jaws of the revolutionary dragon, then the gory vision evaporated into vacuous smoke, and only exhaustion and confusion remained, for this gloomy proletaire felt that as long as he had strength the storm would rage, and that when it passed away he would sink into complete nothingness.

Hence, in his heart bitterness and jealousy accumulated more and more. He loved Marynia and at the same time he hated her, for he thought that she looked upon him as a worm which squirms at her feet, unworthy of a glance. He was confirmed in this conviction by the fact that his

letters evidently did not make the slightest impression upon her and did not disturb her usual tranquillity. Laskowicz had given his word to Pauly that he would see Marynia only from a distance, and he could not approach her, because she was never out alone. But in reality he could not conjecture that those letters were received and burnt by Pani Otocka and that Marynia knew nothing about them. It appeared to him that his passionate appeals in which the words, "Beloved! beloved!" were repeated every little while, and those fiery outbursts in which he prostrated himself in humility at her adored feet must have represented him to her as the ruling king-soul shoving the human wave into the unknown future, and ought to have evoked some result. "Let it be anger, let it be hatred," he said to himself in his soul, "but here there is nothing! She passes by me as if I was a street cur; she does not see me; she does not deign to recognize me."

In fact it was so. In the moments when they passed each other on the street, Marynia did not and could not recognize Laskowicz, for after his departure from Jastrzeb he allowed his youthful beard to grow, and afterwards, Swidwicki, in order to disguise him in the eyes of the police, bleached his beard, together with his mustache and the hair on his head, a light yellow. His clothes and spectacles also changed his appearance but he forgot about that, and he fretted with the supposition that her eyes do not see him or do not recognize him, firstly, because a recollection of him never comes to her mind, and again because she belongs to some kind of social Olympus and he to the "proletarian garbage-box."

Under such impressions his anguish changed into fury. With savage satisfaction, he thought of this: that there might come a time when the fate of this "sacred doll" and all her kin would be in his hands. He persuaded himself that that moment would be a triumph for himself

personally and for the "good cause," and therefore he rejoiced at this conjunction. He pictured to himself what would happen when Marynia came to him to beg for a favor for herself and her relatives. Whether, at that time, he would prostrate himself on the ground before her and tell her to plant her foot on his head, or whether he would seize her in his arms and afterwards pass time away shamelessly — he did not know. He only had a feeling that he could do one or the other.

In the meantime he often said to himself that he ought not to see her any more, and decided to seek her no more, but on the following day he rushed to the place where he could meet her. He struggled with himself, he was torn inwardly, and became exhausted to such an extent that he began to fail in health. Want of such air as he breathed in Jastrzeb, the necessity of hiding from the police, uneasiness, lack of sleep, sudden and painful spiritual changes sapped his strength. He became haggard, swarthy, and at times he thought that death threatened not on the gallows but in a hospital.

In such a disposition was he found by Pauly, who after her scene with Hanka, dashed like a whirlwind into his little garret room.

Her face was so changed, so pale, so sickly and malignant, and her eyes glittered so feverishly that at the first glance he knew that she was driven to him by some extraordinary accident and he asked:

"What has happened?"

"I am no longer with that low peasant."

And she remained silent for she could not catch her breath, and only her face was twitching nervously.

Laskowicz understood only that she had abandoned her employment and looked at her with a questioning gaze, awaiting further explanations.

"Then, sir, you do not know," she broke out after a

while, "then you do not know that he is to marry her? And that she is no Englishwoman, but only a low peasant! And such a one I served! He is to marry her — a low peasant! — a low peasant! — he!"

And her voice changed into a shrill nervous hiccough. Laskowicz was frightened at her transports, but at the same time breathed easily. Howsoever he might long since have conjectured that Krzycki's affections were directed towards Miss Anney and not towards Marynia, he was nevertheless pleased in his soul that reality corroborated those conjectures.

Living, however, in a world which no echoes of the higher social sphere reach, and knowing nothing of the transformation of Miss Anney into a Polish peasant woman, he began to interrogate Pauly minutely because the affair aroused his curiosity; he wished also to give time to the excited girl to calm herself. But this last was not an easy matter, and he long had to put questions to her to elicit the news which Swidwicki had first told her that Miss Anney was a simple peasant woman, but which, however, she did not at first believe, as he said it while under the influence of intoxicants. Only from the conversations which she overheard did she become convinced not only of the truth of the statement but also that Krzycki was to wed Miss Anney. Afterwards she peeped through the keyhole and saw him kneel before her and kiss her hands. Then she could not restrain herself any longer and at the first opportunity flung at the feet of her mistress her "linen frock," and, reviling her as a base peasant, left her service.

Here again indignation began to seize her so that Laskowicz from fear that she might have an attack of convulsions, said:

"We will consult together about this, but only let the lady be pacified."

But she replied with increasing irritation:

"I did not come here for you to pacify me. You, sir, have prated about our mutual wrongs and now you order me to be pacified. I want help and not your chatter."

"You are anxious that he should not marry her?"

"And what else do you suppose?"

In any case Laskowicz would have sided with the girl for he was obligated to do that by gratitude to her for saving his life, by the similarity of their lot, and those "joint wrongs" of which he himself had previously spoken to Pauly, and of which she now reminded him. But the existence of Krzycki at present ceased to stand in his way and Miss Anney's existence less so. Only one thing he could not forgive in her:

"She was a peasant woman, she was a wage-earner, and afterwards became a female bourgeois. In this is the crime."

"In it or not in it, it is now I or she! Do you understand, sir?"

"I understand, but what is to be done?"

"When you ran away from the police, I did not ask what was to be done."

"I remember."

"And you said at Swidwicki's that your people could accomplish everything."

"For it is so."

"So if he only does not marry her, then even let the world end."

Laskowicz began to look at her with his closely set eyes and after a moment commenced to speak slowly and with emphasis:

"Krzycki was once already condemned and lives, thanks to you, lady, but if he gets a bullet in his head, then he will marry no one."

But she, hearing this, turned pale as a corpse; in the same moment she sprang at him with her finger-nails!

"What!" she cried in a hoarse voice; "what! he! Let but a hair fall from his head, then, I will have you all —"

Laskowicz's patience, however, was exhausted. He was irritated, torn internally and sick; hence, after her threat, a wave of bitterness and rage flooded his brains. He started up and, glaring in her eyes, shouted!

"Do not threaten with betrayal, for that is death!"

"Death?" she screamed. "Death! this is what life is to me!"

And shoving her palm close to his face, she blew on it so that her breath moistened him, and repeated:

"Look! This is what life is to me."

"And to me," exclaimed Laskowicz.

For an interval they stared in each other's eyes like two odious and despairing souls. He recovered his wits first, and clasping his head with both hands, said:

"Oh, how unfortunate we are! oh!"

"Yes! yes!" reiterated Panna Pauly.

And she began to sob hysterically.

Then he commenced to quiet her. He promised her that nothing should befall Krzycki and that his marriage would not under any circumstances take place. He said that at that moment he could not indeed disclose to her what measures would be adopted, but he assured her that neither he nor his party would show any consideration to a mere female bourgeois, as here was involved a higher social justice, which does not need to take into account any particular individual. Pauly only understood that that "low peasant" would not wed the young master of Jastrzeb, and became appeased in some measure: and afterwards, both, from necessity, became occupied with other matters. It was imperative that some kind of shelter be found for the young girl: so Laskowicz placed her with "a female associate" residing in the neighborhood, who immediately went for her wages and belongings. He him-

self returned to his own rooms and began to revolve in his mind how he could repay Panna Pauly for saving his life.

And in this feeling of gratitude lay the first reason why he took the matter to heart. A second reason was his own ill-luck and ill-fated love for Marynia which made him sensitive to similar strifes; and the third was that "social justice" which he mentioned to Pauly. As to the third reason he felt, however, the necessity of deliberating with his own soul in order that when the time for action arrived his hands would be untied, and under the pressure of this necessity he began to reason in the following fashion:

"On the background of the general concern of the proletariat, personal affairs will appear. It might be said that the general concern is the sum-total of them all. In this respect whoever stands in defence of the personal affair of a proletaire by that act alone defends universal principles. But here comes the question of ethics. Whither are we tending? To universal justice. Ergo, our principle is moral for it is only the sum-total of personal affairs: therefore these personal affairs also must be moral. From this it follows that the proletaire, who is in the wrong in a controversy with a bourgeois, nevertheless has justice on his side simply because he is a proletaire. In this world everything is relative. A soldier, slaying his opponent in a war, commits manslaughter; therefore the act itself is not ethical. But as he commits it in defense of Fatherland, therefore, from the viewpoint of national welfare he acts ethically. If in addition thereto he has the spur of personal hatred to an antagonist, his act would gain in energy and would not lose its additional significance for Fatherland. For us, the Polish proletariat is the nation and the idea of their emancipation, the Fatherland. For this we wage war and if there is war, then murder and injuries are inflicted upon the antagonists; and even though the motives for them might be personal, they nevertheless are not only

justifiable but are covered a hundred-fold by the universal welfare."

"Besides," — he reasoned further —, "the quintessence of our existence is unhappiness; and from unhappiness as well as, inversely, from happiness must blossom corresponding deeds. This is a necessity flowing from the nature of things; and with this ethics have nothing to do. I and that rabid girl are luckless, like homeless dogs; in view of which it is all one whether a wrong was perpetrated upon us intentionally or unintentionally; just as it is all one to the wolf whether the forester who shoots him in the head, hunted him purposely or whether they met by chance. The wolf has teeth to defend himself. That is his right. The moment has come when our fangs have grown; therefore we have the right to mangle.

"As to that girl, she is mangled by despair which can only be assuaged by revenge. Is it just? Will it be beneficial to the girl? That is all one. The wage-earners without work and bread drown their woes in alcohol; the bourgeois in case of pain injects morphine into himself, and for her, revenge will be alcohol and morphine. Whatever may be the consequences, she will destroy the happiness of the pampered; she will change their joy into tears; she will break their lives and raze a particle of that world, which lies heavily, like a nightmare, upon the breasts of the proletariat. So it is necessary to aid that revenge, for so does gratitude for saving life command; likewise common wrong, also the good of the cause."

In view of this, it already seemed to Laskowicz a matter of minor importance whether in that aid a rôle would be played by a knife, or by a revolver, or by casting upon Hanka some ignominy, after which nothing would remain for her to do but to fly and hide herself forever from human eyes. Neither opportunity nor willing hands were wanting. It was only necessary to deliberate upon the choice: and afterwards to act promptly and decisively.

With this he went to Pauly who agreed to everything. As a compensation he demanded that she should release him from his promise to see Marynia only from a distance, and he secured that with ease. He evidently wanted to have his hands untied also in that regard.

XIII

"HERE is the answer which I finally received, "said Ladislaus, handing a letter to Gronski; "I could not expect anything else."

"I knew that you would receive it," replied Gronski, blinking with his ailing eyes and searching for his binocle, "I was already informed of it by Pani Otocka, who from the beginning insisted that Miss Anney ought to answer you, and in the end prevailed upon her."

Ladislaus reddened and asked:

"Ah! So Zosia Otocka knows everything."

"She does and does not know. Miss Anney told her only this much: 'He did not forget that he is a young lord and I a peasant woman and we ceased to understand each other.' For her it was yet harder to speak of this than for you and that difficulty festers all the more the wound which, without it, is deep enough — But I cannot find the binocle."

"Here it is," said Ladislaus.

Gronski placed it on his nose and began to read:

"You, yourself, sir, rent and trampled upon our joy, our happiness, my trust, and that deep attachment which I had for you. To your query of whether I can ever recover those feelings, I answer that I seek for them in vain. If ever I recover them I will inform you with the same sincerity with which I to-day say that I have in my heart only grief and sadness which for a joint life will not suffice."

"Only so much!" said Ladislaus.

"My foresight," answered Gronski, "is verified only too perfectly. The spring for the time being has dried up."

"To the bottom, to the bottom, not a drop for refreshment."

Gronski remained silent for a while; after which he said:

"I think otherwise, nevertheless. This is not entirely hopeless. There remains sadness, grief and, as it were, the anticipation of the recurring swell. In reality, it will not flow to-day nor to-morrow. — In view of this, for you there remains either to persevere patiently and win anew that which you lost, or else, if you have not sufficient strength, to take some shears and sever the remaining threads."

"Such shears I will not find. Do you remember, sir, what she did for me when I was wounded? I will not forget that."

At this Gronski shaded his eyes with his hand, gazed at Ladislaus intently and asked:

"My dear sir, did you ever propound to yourself one question?"

"What one?"

"What pains you the more, — the loss of Miss Anney or your wounded self-love?"

"I thank you, sir," answered Ladislaus, with irony. "In reality, only self-love. Through it, I do not sleep, do not eat; through it, in the course of a few days, I have grown lean like a shaving and were it not for this living wound, life for me would be one perpetual round of pleasure."

And he began to laugh bitterly, while Gronski continued to gaze at him, not removing his hand from his ailing eyes, and thought:

"That girl has an honest heart, and let her only see him; then she will forgive everything through compassion alone."

After which he said:

"Listen, after a quarter of an hour, I will put on those

dark spectacles and go to the rehearsal. Come with me."

"How will that help me, now?" exclaimed Ladislaus.

"I do not know. I do not even guarantee that we will meet Miss Anney, for Marynia sometimes goes with a servant. But, in any event, you will not lose anything by it; so come."

But further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the doctor, the more unexpected, as he had announced, upon leaving Warsaw, that he would stay with his brother at least ten days.

"How is this? You have already returned!" exclaimed Gronski.

"A surprise, hey?" vociferated the doctor. "Yes! And for me it was a surprise! One medical visit, afterwards a fee supplemented with the amiable advice, 'Get out of here, while you are whole!' Lo, here I am. Oh, what a delightful journey!"

"How did this happen?"

"How did it happen? I will tell you immediately. But no! I know that at this hour you leave for that rehearsal: so I will go with you, gentlemen, and relate it to you on the way. That is such an amusing thing that it is worth while to hear it. Ha!"

Accordingly after a while they went and the jovial doctor began to recite his Odyssey.

"I arrived," he said, "a little fatigued, for that is a distant journey, and besides it is necessary to change cars, wait for trains at the stations, and so forth — the usual order with us. I reached the country-seat late and after greeting my brother, I went to bed at once. But the following day I had barely unpacked the primers — you remember, gentlemen? — those I brought with me for the petty nobility — and I had barely reproved my 'provincial' brother, when an emergency call came summoning me to a high

official who has an estate adjoining our seat and in summer resides with his family in the country. Ha! there was no help for it — I ride! And what appears? Why, a thimble stuck in a child's throat. I found the child already livid, but the moment I pulled the thimble out, the infant went away playing and everything was in the best order. There was nothing else to do. I saved a future dignitary to the empire, and to the parents an only son, as the other children were daughters. So the gratitude was immense. They pay — certainly! I wanted to ride away and iterated that there is nothing more to do. They would not let me go. Gratitude, breakfast, cordiality, friendship, overflowing of Slavonic feelings, and a chat which after a time passed into a political discussion. 'There is not,' says the dignitary, 'harmony amidst brothers. And what a pity! Religion and tongue divide their languages. But what is religion, if not only an outward form? God is one. It is the same to Him whether He is glorified in the Latin or the Slavonic language. Why, for Slavonians it is more seemly if in the Slavonic. And as to the tongue, then the various dialects could be limited to conversations at home. Why, however, should not one language be adopted, not only officially, but in literature? The convenience would be greater, the control easier. Then you would abandon your Catholicism and your dialects and accept ours — the one and the other, — but heartily and voluntarily. And harmony would immediately follow. The times for you would be better. There would be downright delight.' —"

"He mistook his man," interrupted Gronski, laughing.

"And that he should chance upon me," replied the doctor. "I, gentlemen, am a deist, a philosopher, but a passable Catholic. Often it happens that I assail the church just as I assail Poland whenever anything occurs which displeases me. Only if some stranger does the same thing in my presence then — a strange thing! — I have a desire to

knock out his teeth. Therefore I began to defend the Church as if I never in my life crawled out of a sacristy; bah, even better, in a way as if I was a Catholic apologist. 'If,' I said, 'religion is only an external form tell me just why should we abandon this form of ours, which is the most spiritualized, the most cultural, and the most beautiful. That Catholicism, with which you advise us to take our leave, has encompassed the entire West, organized society, produced European civilization, preserved learning, has founded universities, reared churches, which are masterpieces, gave us Saint Augustine, Dante, Petrarch, Saint Francis, and Saint Thomas, created the Renaissance, created Leonardo da Vinci's; "Lord's Supper," Michelangelo's "Tombs of the Medici," Raphael's "School of Athens" and "Disputa," erected such temples as Saint Peter's, not counting others scattered throughout Italy and all over Europe. That Catholicism made us partakers of the universal culture, united us with the West, imprinted a European stamp upon our Polish soul, etc., etc.' And I talked in this strain until he interrupted me and said. 'In this is the misfortune, that it has united you with the West.' And I replied to that, 'A misfortune to whom, and to whom not a misfortune? But now we will speak of your proposition of renouncing the tongue and therefore the nationality. Know, sir, that this is an empty and foolish dream. That never will take place. I proclaim and insist in advance — never! But assuming for a moment an impossible thing, that a pestilence will so blight us, that our hearts will be so debilitated that we will say to ourselves "Enough! — we can no longer be Poles!" then what? Reflect, sir, objectively, like a man who has not lost the ability to think, what could restrain us from becoming Germans? Our Slavonic extraction? But we are Slavonians, just because we are Poles. You are a people who do not know how to live and do not permit

anybody else to live. So what motive would keep us with you? Is it your peace? Your welfare? Your morality? Your administration? Your science? Your learning? Your wealth? Your power? Learn to look in the eyes of reality; cultivate in yourselves the ability to reckon with it, and you will understand that by denationalizing us you labor for some one else. But I reiterate yet once more that this is only a foolish dream; that the moment of renunciation will never come and if I spoke of it, it was only to answer those things which you suggested.'

"With this our conversation ended. They, in a yet higher degree than we, cannot endure unpleasant truths, so my dignitary changed into a decanter of iced water, and on the leave-taking merely said to me: 'Well, you are too candid, young man, but I thank you for the child.' A half an hour later I was at home."

"I can surmise what happened afterwards," said Gronski.

"Yes. As the thimble was removed, that same night I received an order to leave the next day by the first train."

"Be satisfied that it ended with that."

"I am satisfied. I will stay a few days in Warsaw; I will see the notary; I will attend Panna Zbyltowska's concert. Certainly! Certainly!"

Here he addressed Ladislaus.

"How is your mother and your fiancée?"

"Thank you. Mother is not badly, but will soon have to leave."

And desiring to hide his confusion, he began to gaze intently into the depths of the street, and after a while exclaimed:

"But look! I see Panna Marynia with a maid-servant, and with them some third person is walking."

In reality about a hundred paces down the street Marynia could be seen approaching, accompanied by a maid-servant, with the violin in a case. On the other side, though

somewhat behind, walked a young man with a yellowish beard, who, leaning towards Marynia, appeared to speak to her in an earnest and vehement manner. She hastened her steps, turning her head aside, evidently not desiring to listen to him, while he, keeping pace with her, gesticulated violently.

"My God! Some one is molesting her!" said the doctor.

And all three rushed at full speed towards her.

"Who is that? Who are you, sir?"

And Marynia, seeing Gronski, seized his arm and trembling all over, began to cry:

"Home! Take me home, sir!"

Gronski understood in a moment that nothing else could be done and that it was necessary to hurry, as otherwise Marynia might be embroiled in a vulgar street row. He was certain that Ladislaus in whom was accumulated an enormous supply of spleen and irritation, with his impulsive nature, would not permit the offence of the assailant to pass unpunished. So taking the girl aside, he placed her as soon as possible in a hackney-coach, which was passing by and ordered the coachman to drive to Pani Otocka's house.

"There is nothing now. Everything is all right," he said on the way, to pacify the affrighted Marynia. "From home we will send a message that there will be no rehearsal to-day, and with that it will end. It is nothing, nothing."

And he began to press her hand; after a while, he asked:

"But who was that and what did he want?"

"Pan Laskowicz," answered Marynia. "I did not recognize him at first, but he told me who he was."

Gronski became distressed when he heard the name of the student, for it occurred to him that if the encounter with Ladislaus ended with the police, then the consequences for Laskowicz might prove fatal directly. But not desiring to betray his uneasiness before Marynia, and at the same

time wishing to better quiet her, he spoke to her half jokingly:

"So that was Laskowicz? Then I already know what he wanted. Ah! Ah! — Some one begins to play not only on the violin but on the soul. — Only why did you allow yourself to be so frightened?"

"For he also threatened," answered Marynia. "He threatened all terribly — "

"Such bugbears only children fear."

"True! Especially as I am to play for the hungry; they will not do any wrong to me or any of us."

"Assuredly not," confirmed Gronski.

Conversing thus, they reached home. Gronski surrendered Marynia to Pani Otocka's care and when, after a moment, Hanka appeared, he related to them everything which had occurred. He likewise had to quiet Pani Otocka, who, knowing of the letters, took the whole occurrence very much to heart and announced that immediately after the concert they would leave for Zalesin, and afterwards go abroad. After the lapse of a half hour he left and on the stairs met Ladislaus.

"God be praised," he said, "I see that it did not end with the police. Do you know that the man was Laskowicz?"

"And it seemed so to me," said Ladislaus with animation; "but this one had light hair. How is Marynia?"

"She was frightened a little but now is well. Both ladies are at her side and dandle her like a little chicken. They are so occupied with her that Pani Otocka certainly will not receive you."

"And I thought so; especially, if *she* is there," answered Ladislaus, with bitterness; "so I will only leave my card and will return at once. Do you care to wait for me?"

"Very well."

Accordingly, he returned after a while, and when they were on the street, he began to say:

"Yes! and to me it seemed that he was Laskowicz but I was puzzled by the light tuft of hair on his head and the spectacles. After all there was no time for thinking."

"Listen — you undoubtedly cudgelled him?" asked Gronski.

And Ladislaus answered reluctantly:

"Far too much, for he is an emaciated creature, and he evidently did not have a revolver."

For some time they walked in silence; after which Gronski said:

"Your mother needs a cure; the ladies will depart from here immediately after the concert and Miss Anney undoubtedly with them. I would advise you also to think about yourself."

Ladislaus waved his hand.

At the same time in a garret in the quarters of the "female associate," Laskowicz said to Pauly:

"Pan Krzycki is a true gentleman. He battered me a while ago because I dared to approach her."

And he began to laugh through his set teeth.

XIV

THE day of the concert arrived. On the sofa in the sisters' dressing-room lay, ready at an early hour, Marynia's evening dress, white as snow, light as foam, transparent as the mist, and fragrant with violets which were to form her sole adornment. Previously, Pani Otocka and Gronski held a long and grave consultation over that dress, for both craved warmly that their beloved "divinity" should captivate not only the ears but the eyes. In the meanwhile the "divinity" bustled about all the rooms, now seizing the violin and repeating the more difficult passages, now taking the boxes of bon-bons which Gronski had sent to her; then joking with her sister and predicting fright at her first public appearance. This fright also possessed Pani Otocka who consoled herself only with the thought that Marynia indeed would tremble upon entering on the stage, but from the moment she began to play would forget everything. She knew also that a warm ovation awaited the beloved violinist, likewise numerous baskets of flowers, from the "Committee for aiding the hungry," and from acquaintances. Notwithstanding their uneasiness both sisters felt a great joy in their souls, as the concert, owing to the arrivals during the racing season, promised to be highly successful, and it was already known that the receipts would be extraordinary. Marynia besides found a cure for her fright: "When I think," she said to her sister, "that so many eyes will gaze at me, my heart is in my mouth, but when I recollect that I am not

concerned but only the poor, then I cease to fear. So I will save myself in this manner: entering upon the stage, I will repeat quietly, "'T is for the poor! 't is for the poor!' and everything will come off in the best possible way!" And when she spoke, her voice quivered with honest emotion as her young heart felt deeply the woes of the unfortunate who did not have any bread, and at the same time she felt proud and happy at the thought that she would be instrumental in their relief. She even experienced certain pangs of conscience on account of the new dress and the new satin shoes, as it occurred to her that this outlay might have been expended for bread.

About noon Hanka came and took both sisters to her apartments for breakfast. Gronski, who was invited, did not appear, as at that time he was to meet a few journalists. Marynia took her violin with her with the intention of playing after the breakfast the first part of the programme, and in the meanwhile, waiting before they were seated at table, she began to look out from Hanka's salon through the open window on the street.

The day was fair and clear. During the night an abundant rain had fallen which settled the dust, washed the city's stone pavements, refreshed the grass plots, and laved the leaves on the trees. The air became fresh and bracing. From the two acacias, growing under the windows of Hanka's residence, which strewed the walk near them with petals white as snow, came a sweet scent, strong and intoxicating as if from a censer. Marynia partly closed her eyes and, moving her delicate nostrils, sated herself with the perfume with delight, after which she turned to the depth of the room.

"It smells so sweet," she said.

"It does, little kitten," answered Hanka, interrupting a conversation with Pani Otocka. "I purposely ordered the window to be opened."

And the acacias not only smelt sweet but seemed to sing, for both were cumbered by a countless diet of sparrows so that the leaves and flowers quivered from their chirping.

The maiden watched for some time with delighted eyes the small, nimble birds; after which her attention was directed to something entirely different. On the walk before the house, in the middle of the street and on the sidewalk on the opposite side, there began to gather and stand clusters of people who, raising their heads, gazed intently at the windows of Hanka's residence.

Some wretchedly dressed people spoke with the doorkeeper standing at the gate, evidently questioning him about something. The clusters each moment became more numerous and, together with the passers-by, who remained out of curiosity, changed into a mob of several hundred heads. Marynia jumped back from the window.

"Look," she cried, "what is taking place on the street. Oh! oh! Perhaps they are the poor coming to thank me in advance? What shall I do if they come here? what shall I answer? I am not able. — Come, see!"

And saying this, she drew her sister and Hanka to the window. The three young heads leaned out of the window on to the street, but in that moment an incomprehensible thing happened. A ragged stripling pulled out of his pocket a stone and hurled it with all his strengh into the open window. The stone flew over Pani Otocka's head, rebounded on the opposite wall, and fell with noise upon the floor. Hanka, Marynia, and Zosia drew back from the window and began to look at each other with inquiring and startled eyes.

In the meantime on the street resounded savage outcries; the rabble battered down the gate; on the stairs sounded the stamping of feet, after which in the twinkling

of an eye the doors leading to the room burst open with a crash, and a mob, composed of Christians and some Jews, filled the residence.

"Away with the kept mistress! Strike! tear! smash!" howled hoarse voices.

"For the mercy of God! People, what do you want here?" cried Hanka.

"Away with the kept mistress! away with the kept mistress! through the window! on to the street!"

In a moment a young man-servant, who rushed to the assistance of the ladies, was thrown upon the ground and trampled upon. Amidst the dreadful commotion, which the mob increased more and more, the human beasts became unfettered. Women with disheveled hair, filthy striplings with the marks of crime upon their degenerate features, and all manner of ragamuffins with drunken faces, rushed at the furniture, divans, bed curtains, and everything which fell into their hands. In the residence an orgy of destruction prevailed. The rooms were filled with the stench of sweat and whiskey. The mob became infuriated; it broke, smashed, stole. On the street, under the windows piles of splintered furniture were formed. They threw out even the piano. Finally some ruffian, with a pock-marked visage, seized Marynia's violin and brandished it, desiring to shatter it on the wall.

But she jumped to its aid and seized his fist with both hands.

"That is mine! that is mine!—I am to play for the poor—"

"Let go!"

"I will not let go!—that is mine!"

"Let go, carrion!"

"That is mine!"

A shot was fired, and, simultaneously, Pani Otocka's scream pierced the air. Marynia stood for a moment with

upraised hands and head inclined backwards; afterwards she reeled and fell back into Hanka's arms.

The shot and the murder overawed the crowd. The mob became silent, and after a moment began to scamper away, panic-stricken.

XV

Pani Krzycki, Zosia, and Hanka, and with them Gronski, Ladislaus, and Dr. Szremski surrounded the bed on which Marynia lay, after the operation and the extraction of the bullet. A second surgeon and his assistant sat aloof, awaiting the awakening of the patient. In the room, filled with the odor of iodoform, a profound stillness prevailed. Marynia had previously awoke immediately after the operation was performed, but stupefied still by the chloroform and weakened by the loss of blood, she soon sank again into a slumber. Her beautiful head lay motionless upon the pillow, her eyes were closed, and her countenance was waxen and transparent, as if she were already dead. In Pani Otocka and in Gronski, who but now sounded within himself the immensity of his affection for that child, despair whimpered with that quiet, terrible whimper, which lacerates, tugs and rends the bosom but fears to emerge on the surface. Both glanced time and again with alarm at Dr. Szremski who from time to time examined Marynia's pulse, but evidently he himself was uncertain whether that sleep would be final: he only nodded his head and placed his finger to his lips in sign of silence.

Nevertheless, their fears for the time being were vain, as after the lapse of an hour Marynia's eyebrows commenced to rise, quiver, and after a moment she opened her eyes. Her look, at the beginning, was dull and unconscious. Slowly, however, the stupefaction left her and consciousness of what had occurred as well as of the present moment returned. On her countenance appeared an expression

of amazement and affliction, such as a child feels who has been punished cruelly and unjustly. Finally her pupils darkened and two tears coursed down her cheeks.

"For what? — for what?" she whispered with her pallid lips.

Pani Otocka sat at her side and placed her palm on her hand. Gronski was seized with a desire to throw himself on the ground and beat his head on the floor, while the patient asked further in an amazed and mournful whisper:

"For what? — for what?"

God alone could answer that question. But in the meantime the doctor approached and said:

"Do not speak, child, for that harms."

So she became silent, but the expression of affliction did not disappear from her countenance, and tears continued to flow.

Her sister began to wipe them off; repeating in a subdued voice:

"Marynia, Marynia, calm yourself — you will be well — you are not dangerously wounded — no, no — the doctor guarantees that — "

Marynia raised her eyes at her as if she desired to divine whether she was telling the truth. It appeared, however, that she listened to her sister's words with a certain hope.

After which, she said:

"It is sultry. — "

The doctor opened the window of the room. Out in the open air the night was fair and starry. Waves of fresh air brought the scent of the acacias.

The patient lay for some time calm, but suddenly she began again to seek somebody with her eyes and asked:

"Is Pan Gronski here?"

"I am, dear, I am — "

"You, sir — will not — let me? — Truly — "

To Gronski it seemed at that moment that he was

enveloped by a deep night and that amidst that impenetrable darkness he answered in a strange voice:

"No, no!"

And she spoke with terror, her countenance growing more and more pallid:

"I do not want to die — I am afraid —"

And again tears began to trickle from her eyes — tears inconsolable, tears of a wronged child.

The entrance of a priest relieved the harrowing moment. It was the same old prelate, a relative of the Krzyckis and the Zbyltowskis, who previously shrived Pani Krzycki. Drawing nearer, he sat beside Marynia's bed and bending over her with a cheering smile, full of hope, said:

"How are you, dear child? Ah, the wretches! — But God is more powerful than they and everything will end well. I only came to ask about your health. God be praised the bullet is already extracted. — Now only patience is necessary and you will be patient — will you not?"

Marynia winked her eyes as a token of acquiescence.

The amiable old man continued in a more genial and as if jubilant voice:

"Ah! I knew that you would. Now I will tell you that there is something which often is more efficacious than all the medicines and bandages. Do you know what it is? The Sacrament! Ho! how often in life have I seen that people, who were separated from death by a hair, became at once better after confession, communion, and anointment, and after that recovered their health entirely. You, my dove, are surely far from death, but since it is a Christian duty, which helps the soul and body, it is necessary to perform it. Well, child?"

Marynia again winked her eyes in sign of assent.

Those present retired from the room and returned only upon the sound of the little bell to be witnesses to the Communion. The patient, after receiving it, lay for some time

with closed eyelids and a quiet brightness in her countenance, after which the moment of extreme unction arrived.

In the room assembled, besides those previously present, the servants of the house; suppressing their sobs, they heard the customary prayers before the rite.

"Lord, Jesus Christ, who hast said through Thy apostle Saint James, 'Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.' We implore Thee, Lord God, our Redeemer, for the grace of The Holy Ghost: have mercy upon this sick one, heal her wounds, pardon her sins, and banish from her all pains of soul and body, and in Thy mercy return health completely to her, in order that, restored to life, she may again give herself up to good deeds. Oh Thou, who being God, livest and reignest with the Father and Holy Ghost, now and forever. Amen."

The priest appeared to hurry. Quickly he took the vessel standing between two candles under the crucifix and approaching the patient he whispered the second, brief prayer required by the ritual, and at the same time began to administer extreme unction. He first touched the girl's eyelids, saying, "Through this holy unction and His own most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins or faults thou hast committed by sight"; after that he anointed her ears to purge the sins which she might have committed through the sense of hearing; after that the lips; after that the hands, resembling two white lilies, which that day were to have played for the poor; and finally he blessed her whole body from head to feet — already purified of all blemish and already as truly angelic and immaculate as a lily in the field.

A half hour passed. To those present it seemed that the patient again succumbed to slumber. But unexpectedly she opened her eyes wide, and cried in a stronger, as if joyful, voice:

"How much bread! — How much bread! —"
And she expired calmly.

During the depth of the night, a young man came to the gate and asked the doorkeeper whether the little lady was still alive and, hearing that she had died, he left in silence.

An hour later in the garret of one of the houses near the Vistula a shot from a revolver was fired, and, filled with consternation, the inmates suddenly awakened from their sleep. The people in the neighboring rooms flocked to the place of the accident. The locked doors of the room were battered down but all aid was futile. On the bed lay the dead body of the student with his breast perforated by a shot.

The gloomy, tragic soul had already flown into darkness.

XVI

The room in which Marynia died was changed into a funeral chamber. The coffin stood in the middle, high, amidst burning candles and a whole forest of plants and flowers, of which such a number were amassed that they filled not only the chamber but even the anteroom and the stairway. The coffin was still open and in the brightness of the day, blended with the light of the wax-candles, Marynia could be seen dressed in that same dress in which she was to have appeared at the concert. The little metal cross which she held in her folded hands glittered like a sparkling spot on a dark background of plants. Her face was pensive, but without the slightest trace of suffering, — and at the same time as if she was absorbed in listening to voices, sounds, and tones, which were inaudible and incomprehensible to mortals.

Though the open windows there blew in from time to time a breeze, extinguishing here and there the unsteady flames of the candles and causing the leaves of the plants to rustle. On the acacias in front of the house the sparrows chirped boisterously; one would think that they were relating to each other feverishly what had happened; while at the side of the catafalque a human stream flowed. There came with wreaths, workingmen, for whose benefit the concert was to have been given, and at the sight of the barbarously slain little lady, they left with fire in their eyes and clenched fists. The intelligence of the monstrous and reckless crime attracted whole throngs of students, who determined to carry the coffin on their shoulders. In the meantime they moved slowly and quietly about the

catafalque, gazing with bosoms swelling with sympathy and grief at the silvery profile of the girl, turned towards heaven, and unconsciously they recalled the words of the poet:

"And now in pale satin enshrouded,
In silence, hands folded, she lies."

Horror, indignation, and at the same time curiosity aroused the city from centre to circumference. Even the streets in front of the house were thronged by great crowds — uneasy, being unable to explain to themselves how such a thing happened — and, as if, alarmed by the thought of what the future might bring forth, what other crimes might be committed and what other victims the uncertain morrow might devour.

The remains of Marynia were to be conveyed to the railway and from there to Zalesin where the tombs of the Otockis were located. Immediately after noon the coffin was taken off the stretchers and then, before its sealing, came for Pani Otocka and for Gronski the dreadful moment of viewing for the last time in life that beloved being who was for them a light and sun. If she had died of some sickness their despair might not have been less, but it would have been more intelligible to them. But she was murdered! They murdered this sweet and innocent child, just at a time when she wanted to aid people and when she rejoiced at the thought of that aid. Murdered was that incarnate song, that fragrant flower, sent by God for the joy of mankind! And in just this there was something which could not be confined within the limits of despair, but reached into the borders of madness. For lo, this is the last moment for beholding that love, that youth, that maidenly charm, that white victim of crime and mistake; and after that nothingness, darkness, — solitude.

But overstrained pain kills itself like a scorpion, it covers

the intellect with darkness, and commands the blood to congeal in the veins. That happened with the sister of the slain. For a long time Dr. Szremski was uncertain whether he would be able to restore her to life. In the consternation and confusion it was hardly observed that into the chamber there rushed an insane woman and, whining mournfully, she flung herself upon the ground. Swidwicki led her away with the aid of the students and intrusted her to their care.

In the meantime the coffin was sealed; the youths placed it on their shoulders and the funeral party moved towards the railway. After them marched a long procession, at the end of which empty carriages jogged along. The ever-increasing swarm flowed along the middle of the streets and sidewalks; and not until they reached the bridge did those who joined the procession only through curiosity begin to return home.

Swidwicki approached Dr. Szremski, and for some time both walked in silence, not perceiving that they were remaining more and more behind the procession.

"You knew the deceased?" asked the doctor.

"Otocki was my relative."

"Ah, what a horrible mistake it was?"

But Swidwicki blurted out:

"That was no mistake. That is the logical result of the times, and in those that are coming such accidents will become a customary, every-day occurrence."

"How do you understand that?"

"The way it should be understood. That coffin has greater meaning than it seems. That is an announcement! A mistake? No! That was only an incident. Lo, to-day we are burying a harp, which wanted to play for the people, but which the rabble trampled upon with their filthy feet. — Wait, sir! Let things continue to proceed thus, and who knows whether, after ten or twenty years, we will not

thus bury learning, art, culture, bah! even the entire civilisation. And that not only here but everywhere. There will be an endless series of such events. — To me, after all, it is all one, but absolutely it is possible."

The doctor ruminated for some time in silence over Swidwicki's words; finally he exclaimed:

"Ah, knowledge, knowledge, knowledge."

Swidwicki stood still, seized the doctor by the flap of his coat and shaking his goat-like beard, said:

"Hear, sir, an atheist, or at least, a man who has nothing to do with any religion: knowledge without religion breeds only thieves and bandits."

The procession paused for a while on account of an obstruction on the road; so conversing, they drew nearer to the coffin; nevertheless, Swidwicki, though lowering his voice, did not cease to talk:

"Ay, sir — a great many people think the same as I do; only they have not the courage to say it aloud. After all, I reiterate it is all one to me, — we are lost past all help. With us there are only whirlpools. — And these, not whirlpools upon a watery gulf, beneath which is a calm depth, but whirlpools of sand. Now the whirlwind blows from the East and the sterile sand buries our traditions, our civilization, our culture — our whole Poland — and transforms her into a wilderness upon which flowers perish and only jackals can live."

Here he pointed to Marynia's coffin:

"Lo, there is a flower which has withered. Do you know, sir, why I, though a relative, seldom visited them? Because I felt ashamed before her eyes."

They reached the station and went upon the roadway, from which could be seen the coach, decorated with flowers and fir-tree boughs.

"Are you riding to Zalesin?" asked the doctor.

"I am. I want to gaze at Pani Otocka. God knows

what now will become of her. And see, sir, how Gronski looks. An old man — what? Now his Latin and books will not help him."

"Who would not have felt this," answered the doctor. "Krzycki also looks as if he were taken off the cross."

"Krzycki? But perhaps it is because his matrimonial plans are broken."

Further conversation was interrupted by the orchestra which began to play Chopin's "Funeral March."

XVII

Dr. Szremski upon his return to the hotel began to ponder over Swidwicki's words, which were imbedded deeply in his memory. Before his eyes there glided a picture of the funeral procession and that coffin, with the victim, murdered by those to whom she wanted to do good. "Yes, yes!" he said to himself, "that apparently was a mistake, but similar mistakes are the logical consequences of the unbridled, blind, animal instincts. We must admit that we are flying at break-neck speed into some bottomless abyss. And not only we. But is it allowable to conclude from this, that, as to-day we conducted song, murdered by the rabble, so after ten, twenty, or fifty years we will witness the burial of learning, culture, and civilization? Apparently — yes. It is high time that God, Who rules the world, should give new proofs that He in reality rules. It ought to thunder so that the earth would tremble — or what? Mankind are entering upon a road which is directly opposite to entire nature. For the whole endeavor of nature is to create as perfect beings as possible and through them to ennoble the species; and humanity perversely kills them as it did that angelic child, or else seizes them by the hair to drag them from the heights to the general level. And nevertheless this is but a specious appearance. If the engineers determined to excavate all the mountains and make the earth as smooth and even as a billiard ball, some convulsions would take place, some eruptions of volcanoes would occur, which would create new abysses and new heights. Of the Aryan spirit can be said that which the Grecians, enamoured with the soothing

architectonical lines, said of the Roman arches: 'The arch will never fall asleep.' Likewise the Aryan spirit. The humanity, which possesses it, is incapable of drifting into infinity on one wave, thinking one thought and living in one idea. That which is to-day — will pass away. On the summits of reason, feeling, and will, new whirlwinds will generate and they will raise new waves."

Here the doctor's thoughts were apparently directed nearer to matters lying more on his heart, for he began to clench his fist and pace with big, uneasy steps about the room.

"Will we," he said to himself, "however, remain amidst these convulsions, waves, and whirlwinds? Whirlpools? Whirlpools! — and of sand! Sand is burying the whole of Poland and transforming her into a wilderness, on which jackals live. If this is so, then it would be best to put a bullet in the head. — I am curious as to what Gronski would say to this — but lightning has struck his head and it is of no use to speak to him. — We are lost past all help? That is untrue! Beneath these whirlpools which are whirling upon the surface of our life is something which Swidwicki did not perceive. There is more than elsewhere, for there is a bottomless depth of suffering. There plainly is not in the world greater misfortune than ours. With us the people awake in the morning and follow the plough in the field, go to the factory, to the offices, behind the benches in the shops, and all manner of labor — in pain. They go to sleep in pain. That suffering is as boundless as the expanse of the sea while the whirlpools are but ripples upon that expanse. And why do we suffer thus? Of course, we might, at once, to-morrow, breathe more freely and be happier. It would be sufficient for every one to say to Her, that Poland, of whom Swidwicki says that she is perishing, 'Too much dost Thou pain me, too much dost Thou vex me; therefore I renounce Thee and from this day wish to

forget Thee.' — And nevertheless nobody says that; not even such a Swidwicki, who prevaricated when he said it is all one to him; not even they who throw bombs, and murder sisters and brothers! — And if it is so that we prefer to suffer than renounce Her, then where are the jackals and where is Her destruction? Jackals seek carrion, not suffering! So She lives in every one of us, in all of us together, and will survive all the whirlpools in the world. And we will set our teeth and will continue to suffer for Thee, Mother, and we — and if God so wills it, — and our children and grandchildren will not renounce neither Thee nor hope."

Here Szremski was touched by his own thoughts, but dawn brightened his countenance. He found an answer to the question which Swidwicki thrust into his soul. Walking, he began to repeat: "For nothing, nobody would consent to suffer thus." After which it occurred to his mind that to suffer for Her was not yet sufficient, for he began to rub his hands and turn up his rumpled sleeves, as if he wanted at once to do some important and urgent work. But, after a while, he observed that he was in the hotel, so he smiled, with his sincere, peculiar smile, and said aloud:

"Ha! It cannot be helped. To-morrow I must return to my hole and push the wheelbarrow along."

And suddenly he sighed:

"To my solitary hole."

After which, he, himself, not knowing why, recollected what Swidwicki had told him about the breaking of Krzycki's matrimonial engagement, and his thoughts, like winged birds, began to fly to Zalesin.

THE END

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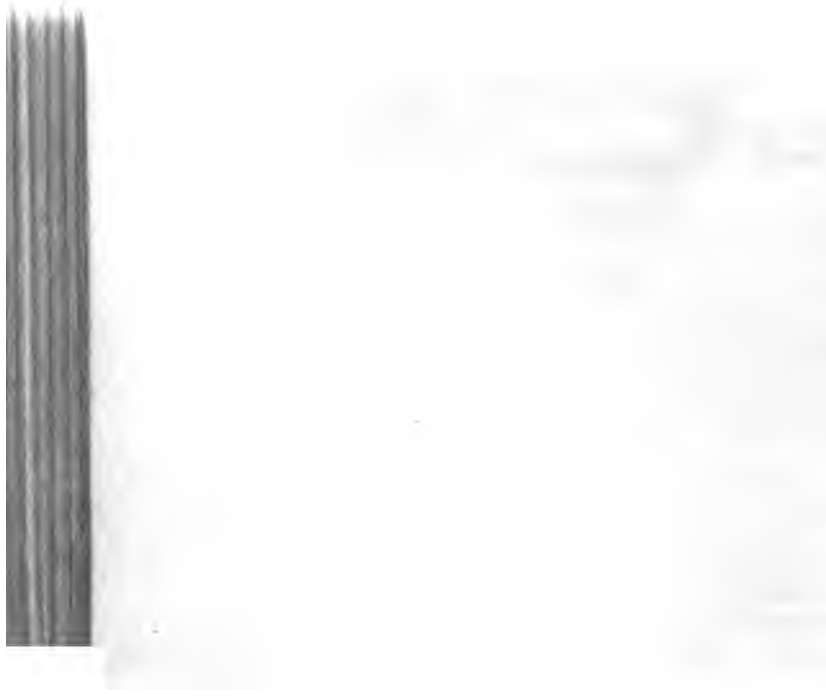

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